

Legal Protection and Human Rights for Child Marriage and Stunting Perpetrators in Gorontalo Province

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.29240/negrei.v5i2.14414>

Submitted: Aug 28, 2025; Reviewed: Dec 15, 2025; Accepted: Dec 29, 2025

Abstract: This study aims to examine the implementation of legal protection and human rights in addressing child marriage and stunting, and to analyze policies to improve optimization in Gorontalo Province. The research employs normative and empirical methods by analyzing legal regulations and factual conditions in society. The results indicate that the implementation of legal and human rights protection related to child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province has not been optimal. This condition is reflected in enforcement of the minimum marriage age regulation, high numbers of marriage dispensations, violations of children's human rights, especially against girls, and the strong relationship between child marriage and stunting. In addition, cross-sector programs in law, health, and social affairs are not well integrated, public legal awareness remains low, and the role of religious and traditional leaders in Gorontalo has not been maximized. Policies to enhance optimization include local government initiatives to establish regional regulations on preventing child marriage and stunting, stricter supervision of marriage dispensations, strengthening education and socialization related to law and human rights, reinforcing Child Protection Institutions and the Women and Children Protection Office, integrating cross-sector programs, developing information systems, involving traditional and religious leaders, and conducting evaluations of cases and programs agencies..

Keywords: Optimization of legal protection; Human Rights; Child Marriage; Stunting; Family Law.

Introduction

Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage explains Article 7 Paragraph (1) that marriage is only allowed if a man and a woman have reached the age of 19 years, paragraph (2) emphasizes that if there is a deviation, the parents of the man/woman can request a dispensation from the Court with urgent reasons accompanied by sufficient evidence. The reason is because child marriage has a negative impact. Child marriage is a marriage carried out by a couple who are not old enough and can even be said to be incapable of building a household.

Child marriage will have a negative impact on the child itself, with their rights neglected in terms of health, psychological, educational, and social. The prevention and handling of child

marriage must be carried out comprehensively to enable a better future for Indonesian children. One of the negative impacts of child marriage is education about parental parenting so that it has an impact on the risk of stunting. Child marriage and the prevalence of stunting intersect, because some parents of stunted children are perpetrators of child marriage practices.

Stunting is a child who is born with a short or dwarf body compared to the standard of children of his age.¹ Growth and development are affected by stunting, a chronic malnutrition problem caused by a lack of food intake for a long time.²

Legally, Indonesia has set the age limit for marriage through its national law in the form of the Marriage Law. Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, and other international instruments that protect children's rights. However, the implementation and enforcement of the law in the field still experience difficulties. Although there are laws prohibiting child marriage, there are still many practices of marriage dispensation that are legal barriers to underage marriage.

Child protection is all activities to guarantee and protect children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop and participate, optimally in accordance with the dignity and dignity of humanity, and receive protection from violence and discrimination.³ In addition, this fundamental right of the child is also regulated by the child protection law, which is *a lex specialis derogat legi generalis* (a special law overrides general laws). However, in the context of human rights and child protection, these two complement and strengthen children's human rights.⁴

Human Rights (HAM) are the basic principles that govern the rights and freedoms of every person without discrimination based on race, religion, gender, nationality, or other factors.⁵ Children in various countries, especially in developing countries, are affected by early marriage which is a national and international problem. Human rights are the international basis for protecting children's rights, such as the right to a decent life, education, and welfare. Early marriage is clearly contrary to human rights because it deprives children of childhood and forces them to shoulder adult tasks that they may not be ready to complete.⁶

Although the minimum age of marriage has been changed, many couples still apply for a marriage dispensation and marry underage, if the marriage dispensation is rejected and this child

¹ Maiza Duana et al., "The Impact of Early Marriage on Generation Z in Stunting Prevention," *COMSEP: Journal of Community Service* 3, no. 2 (2022): 195–200, doi:<https://doi.org/10.54951/comsep.v3i2.292>.

² Khadijah Dinda Dewi Putri et al., "The Effect of Early Marriage on Stunting Growth Rate in Terjun Village, Medan Marelan District," *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal* 6, no. 1 (2024): 817–27, doi:[10.47476/reslaj.v6i1.2209](https://doi.org/10.47476/reslaj.v6i1.2209).

³ "Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection" (n.d.).

⁴ Yunita Syofyan and Didi Nazmi, "A Comparative Study of Child Marriage in Customary Law in Indonesia and India Reviewed from a Human Rights Perspective," *Swara Justisia Journal* 6, no. 4 (2023), doi:[10.31933/ujsj.v6i4](https://doi.org/10.31933/ujsj.v6i4).

⁵ Widyawati Boediningsih and Novi Prameswari Regina Dermawan, "The Development of Human Rights in Indonesia and its Problems," *Education: Journal of Social Humanities and Education* 3, no. 2 (June 8, 2023): 77–87, doi:[10.51903/education.v3i2.336](https://doi.org/10.51903/education.v3i2.336).

⁶ Tazkia Tunnafsia Siregar, Ika Rachmawati Putri Sukarno, and Laura Sharendova Gunawan, "The Role of Human Rights and Customary Law in Preventing Early Marriage in Indonesia," *Journal of Innovative* 3, no. 5 (2023).

marriage occurs, the child will be hampered in obtaining the rights they should have.⁷ With its demographic and socio-cultural characteristics, Gorontalo Province still faces the problem of child marriage. Data shows that the rate of child marriage in Gorontalo is still quite high, this can potentially lead to the prevalence of stunting. Stunting endangers the future quality of human resources because it has an impact on children's health, cognition, and productivity.

The Gorontalo Provincial Government, both at the district, city, and provincial levels, faces special challenges related to the increase in stunting rates, Child marriage is considered a violation of Human Rights provisions under the current Human Rights treaty.⁸ Gorontalo Province the number of child marriages can be seen in the annual report of the High Court of Religion of the marriage dispensation section. Children's rights are regulated in articles 52 and 53 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights. The government has long taken policies in handling child marriage and stunting, but in reality these two problems are difficult to contain.

Based on data from the High Court of Religion in 2024, there will be 588 requests for marriage dispensation⁹ and in 2025 in the vulnerable period of January – July totaling 283 cases¹⁰ The practice of child marriage not only violates Human Rights, but also negatively impacts the health and development of children, including the risk of stunting. In 2023, the stunting rate in Gorontalo Province will increase by 26.9%.¹¹ And in 2024 it will drop to 23.0%¹². Although this number has decreased, it is still far from the target of 14%. This is a serious concern, considering that stunting can affect the quality of human resources in the future. The child protection law is regulated in Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, aiming to protect children from various forms of exploitation, including child marriage. Regulations have clearly regulated the legal protection and human rights regarding children and stunting, but looking at the existing facts, its optimization is still a question.

In line with the Achievement of Asta Cita point 1 regarding the Pancasila Ideology, democracy and human rights, one of which is prioritizing the making of laws related to the protection of women and children and strengthening law enforcement.¹³ Therefore, this research supports the developed Indonesian State, especially in terms of legal protection and human rights for children.

In the context of human rights protection, children as the most affected parties have rights that need to be fulfilled, including the right to education, health, protection from exploitation, and the right to grow and develop. Violations of these rights indicate that the phenomenon of child

⁷ Rino Cahya Pratama, "The Phenomenon of Marriage Dispensation and Early Marriage in Ponorogo Regency from the Perspective of Maqashid Sharia and Human Rights," *Familia: Journal of Family Law* 5, no. 1 (June 30, 2024), doi:10.20527/jgp.v2i1.3169.

⁸ Imran Siswado and Supriadi, "Underage Marriage from a Human Rights Perspective," *Edusociata: Journal of Sociology Education* 6, no. 1 (2023): 241–49, doi:https://doi.org/10.33627/es.v6i1.1171.

⁹ Gorontalo High Court of Religion, *Annual Report 2024*, n.d.

¹⁰ Gorontalo High Court of Religion, *Marriage Dispensation Data, January - July 2025*, Kinsatker Religious Justice Body, 2025 <https://www.pa-takalar.go.id/index.php/berita-2/pengawasan/pengawasan-melekat>.

¹¹ Andrianto S Sanga, "Stunting in Gorontalo Rises by 3.1 Percent in 2023," *RRI Digital*, 2024, https://www.rri.co.id/daerah/713172/stunting-in-gorontalo-up-3-1-percent-in-2023.

¹² Gorontalo Provincial Health Office, *Gorontalo Province Stunting Data*, 2025.

¹³ "Vision and Mission of Advanced Indonesia 2024," accessed April 4, 2025, https://mmc.tirto.id/documents/2023/10/26/1276-visi-misi-indonesia-maju-2024-final.pdf?x=2676.

marriage is not only a moral and cultural issue, but also a human rights violation that requires deep attention from the government and society. The development of the quality of Human Resources (HR) is a fundamental basis for the progress of a nation. This is in line with Asta Cita 1, which emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of Indonesian human resources in order to become healthy, competitive, and characterful individuals. However, this effort is still faced with significant challenges, especially related to the phenomenon of child marriage and stunting that is still ongoing in various regions, including in Gorontalo Province.

The formulation of this research problem is how to implement legal and human rights protection for child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province and what are effective policies or programs that can be implemented to improve the optimization of legal and human rights protection for child marriage and stunting perpetrators in Gorontalo Province.

The importance of research because the problem of child marriage and stunting is difficult to overcome, it needs to be studied from the perspective of legal protection and human rights, it is necessary to contribute to the government regarding effective policies/programs so that the law runs optimally, so that this research is able to solve the problem of child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province.

Research Method

The methods used are *Mixed methods* (Normative Juridical and Empirical Juridical Methods). This research involves the collection and analysis of data normatively and empirically in a series of related issues. This method aims to combine the strengths of each approach to provide a deeper understanding of the case in question. The sources of data and legal materials collected in this study are primary legal data/materials and secondary legal data/materials. The primary legal materials come from Law No. 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage, Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning child protection, Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning human rights, Law (Law) Number 4 of 2024 concerning Maternal and Child Welfare, Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, and other regulations related to the problem to be researched. In line with the type of mixed research, Primary Data is in the form of direct data obtained from sources/respondents through the distribution of questionnaires/questionnaires and interviews. Secondary legal data/materials are primary data supporters in the form of journals and books relevant to research. The approaches used are the case approach and the law approach. Techniques Collecting data and legal materials consist of surveys, questionnaire distribution, interviews and literature studies to internet searches. The analysis used is a qualitative descriptive analysis, an analysis that is intended to unravel the empirical facts about child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province, then linked and resolved through a literature review on the implementation of legal protection and human rights, as well as the contribution of effective programs or legal policies in improving the optimization of the law.

Discussion and Analysis

1. Implementation of Legal and Human Rights Protection against Child Marriage and Stunting in Gorontalo Province

When a child goes through an important period in his growth and begins to form his personality, he will undergo various changes in various aspects that are very important for the survival of life. These changes occur during all of its activities and activities.¹⁴ One of them is from education or from association between environments. But with the development of the times in the modern era and digitalization, sometimes this important period is abused by some children, so that it has an impact on promiscuity which leads to early marriage and has an impact on inequality in the surrounding environment.

Gender inequality in society is caused by child marriage. In both the short and long term, child marriage can lead to a sustained cycle of poverty, increased illiteracy, poor health, and a broader loss of societal productivity.¹⁵ Marriage must be expedited if it meets the requirements of the state and religion. However, many people violate state laws that require marriage when the age is under 19 for both men and women. For a variety of reasons, such as a very close relationship between men and women, or because women get pregnant earlier than men. To carry it out, various parties must agree or give permission, especially religious courts.¹⁶

Family life can be made more secure by laws that are clear, accessible, and sensitive to community requirements. The state can stop harmful behaviors like underage marriage, unequal rights distribution, and unjust family dispute settlement by enforcing strict restrictions.¹⁷ The imposition of age restrictions on marriage seeks to promote a successful union, including the ability to have children, by establishing appropriate marriage ages and ensuring the health of reproductive organs. Therefore, it is essential to consider the age at which individuals marry within a household.¹⁸

This mortality rate is high due to lack of care during pregnancy, stress and emotions during pregnancy, which leads to complications during pregnancy, inadequate care of the baby after pregnancy, and childbirth. Additionally, considering the age of motherhood, it is important for adolescents to be given sex education about when a child enters puberty. They should also be informed about sexual problems and the best way to overcome curiosity. This is excellent because it makes it easier for them to reduce recognition and start new relationships with others. However,

¹⁴ Achmad Nasrullah, "A Review of Islamic Law on the Psychological Impact of Child Marriage," *Al-Qadba : Journal of Islamic Law and Legislation* 9, no. 1 (February 23, 2022): 175–90, doi:10.32505/qadha.v9i1.3870.

¹⁵ Elisabeth Putri Tampubolon Lahitani, "The Problem of Early Marriage in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 5 (May 21, 2021): 738–46, doi:10.36418/jiss.v2i5.279.

¹⁶ Fahrozi, Zamzami, and Eko Arif Susanto, "Dispensation of Marriage of Minors: Perspectives on State Law, Customary Law, and Religious Law," *Hukama: Journal of Islamic Law* 1, no. 1 (2022), <http://journal.stissubulussalam.ac.id/index.php/HUKAMA/index>.

¹⁷ Annisa Riyantika and others, "The Role of Legal Governance in Marriage to Support the SDGs Goals in the Area of Family Life Based on Law Number 16 of 2019 Concerning Marriage", *NEGREL: Academic Journal of Law and Governance*, 4.2 (2024), 243–58 <<https://doi.org/10.29240/negrei.v4i2.11601>>.

¹⁸ Restika Susanti, "Legal Analysis Of The Judge's Consideration On The Matter "Marriage Dispensation From The Perspective Of Justice", *NEGREL: Academic Journal of Law and Governance*, 4.1 (2024), 111–44 <<https://doi.org/10.29240/negrei.v4i1.11562>>.

sometimes youth do not have the opportunity to be counseled.¹⁹ In line with national laws and regulations, such as the Marriage and Child Protection Law, as well as various other laws, Gorontalo Province has a strong legal basis. In addition, the Gorontalo local government has enacted local policies or Regional Regulations to stop child marriage and reduce stunting.

Through this decision, the Constitutional Court seeks to reduce the number of child marriages that threaten the future of children. The marriage age limit for girls being raised to 19 is a significant legal measure expected to protect children's rights and give them the opportunity to develop better. Nevertheless, these changes not only have an impact on formal law, but must also be implemented effectively at the court level, especially in the Religious Courts, which are responsible for the settlement of marriage cases in Indonesia.²⁰

Most children who experience stunting are born to married mothers at an early age. Mothers who are not biologically and mentally immature tend to be unprepared to take care of children, provide adequate nutrition, and access maternal and child health services. Thus, child marriage becomes a significant risk factor in causing stunting, which ultimately threatens the quality of human resources in the future.

Implementation in Addressing these two problems requires legal and human rights protection. On the one hand, there are regulations available, such as the Child Protection Law and the Health Law, but law enforcement is still weak due to little supervision, lack of cooperation between institutions, and lack of strategies to integrate child protection with integrated stunting control. In addition, the role of religious and customary institutions in changing the paradigm of society is still not optimized.

The four main principles of legal protection of children are as follows: (1) children should not be discriminated against. (2) Any action relating to children, whether in the public or private sphere, shall take into account the interests of the child. (3) the state must be responsible for ensuring the survival and development of children. and (4) children should have the right to express their opinions freely.²¹

Child marriage and the direct consequences of stunting are violations of children's rights as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and various other national laws and regulations. Therefore, there needs to be a more progressive legal approach that not only carries out repressive measures but also carries out preventive measures and teaching. A stronger and more integrated child protection system should be built by local governments, legal institutions, child protection institutions, and religious and community organizations. This is especially true in areas prone to stunting and early marriage.

Some of the implementations are: (1) The implementation of regulations regarding the marriage age limit, the Government has implemented Law No. 16 of 2019 which raises the minimum age of marriage to 19 years for men and women but its implementation in Gorontalo is still constrained by local culture and weak supervision of the marriage dispensation process. (2) Due to the high number of marriage

¹⁹ Syaharani Putri Ubaidillah and Taun, "Legal Protection for Child Marriage According to Law Number 16 of 2019," *Scientific Journal of Wabana Pendidikan* 8, no. 20 (2022): 290–96.

²⁰ Fibriyanti Karim, "The Effect of Marriage Age Limit Changes on Marriage Dispensation Granting by the Limboto Religious Court," *Reformasi Hukum* 28, no. 3 (December 31, 2024): 218–33, doi:10.46257/jrh.v28i3.1081.

²¹ Sulastri Sulastri, Dwi Aryanti Ramadhani, and Muthia Sakti, "Legal Protection of Children's Self-Development Rights Due to Marriage Dispensation," *Al-Manhaj Journal* 5, no. 2 (August 7, 2023): 1285–96, doi:10.37680/almanhaj.v5i2.2816.

dispensations, the Gorontalo Religious Court still often grants marriage dispensation to children who have not reached the age of 19. Various factors such as family desires, financial pressure, or out-of-wedlock pregnancies. This shows that legal protection has not completely prevented child marriage. (3) Human rights violations against children, especially girls, Children who marry early are at risk of losing their rights to education, health care, and protection from violence. Child marriage violates the right of children to grow and develop optimally, which is guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the context of human rights. (4) The relationship between Child Marriage and Stunting, children born to mothers who marry at a young age have a higher risk of experiencing stunting because there is not enough nutrition for the mother. Mothers are not mentally and physically prepared. Lack of health services for mother-children. (5) Lack of Integration of Cross-Sector Programs Legal, health, and social programs have not been integrated. There is no child protection system that collaborates to prevent child marriage and stunting. (6) Low Public Awareness, many Gorontalo people still consider child marriage as a solution to social problems such as poverty or unwanted pregnancy. To carry out protection, socialization of law and human rights is very important. (7) The Role of Gorontalo Religious and Traditional Leaders Is Not Adequate Gorontalo religious and traditional leaders have not actively participated in the fight against child marriage. Despite this, they play a strategic role in shaping the culture and opinions of the Community.

Children's considerations determine special treatment for children. The human resources of the younger generation, which are the potential and successors of the ideals of the nation's struggle, have a strategic role and special characteristics. They need guidance and protection in order to grow and develop physically, mentally, and socially in a whole, harmonious, and balanced manner. Therefore, stronger and more adequate legal institutions and tools are needed to implement child development and protection.²²

Significant relationship between stunting in toddlers in Indonesia and exclusive breastfeeding, birth weight, age, and birth length. However, other research showed that there was no significant association between birth weight and exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers.²³

To implement legal protection and children's rights in Gorontalo Province, a multisectoral and rights-based approach must be applied to protect children through family economic empowerment, education improvement, and responsive health services. It is hoped that this effort can reduce the rate of child marriage while combating stunting in a sustainable manner.

The Ministry of Health has designated stunting as a major threat to the health of the Indonesian people. This not only inhibits physical growth but also inhibits mental development, which negatively impacts the abilities and achievements of affected children. In addition, due to their weakened immune systems, stunted children are more prone to overall health problems. Stunting can continue across generations if not handled properly. Given the significant health impacts of stunting, understanding the root causes is essential.²⁴

²² Muhammad Ridho Sinaga, "Guarantee of Children's Legal Protection: Optimization of the Women and Children Unit of the National Police Institution," *Legitimation: Journal of Criminal Law and Legal Politics* 11, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): 198, doi:10.22373/legitimasi.v11i2.16064.

²³ Maria TM Madhe et al., "Factors Related to the Incidence of Stunting in Toddlers in Indonesia," *OAJJHS: Open Access Jakarta Journal of Health Sciences* 1, no. 2 (November 9, 2021): 43–48, doi:10.53801/oajjhs.v1i3.23.

²⁴ Oslida Martony, "Stunting in Indonesia: Challenges and Solutions in the Modern Era," *Journal of Telenursing (JOTING)* 5, no. 2 (August 23, 2023): 1734–45, doi:10.31539/joting.v5i2.6930.

The relationship between child marriage and stunting is a significant finding in this study, where families who are not economically and knowledgeably prepared are not able to optimally meet the health and nutritional needs of children. This condition has the potential to reduce the quality of the next generation, which should be a point of concern in efforts to increase human resources in Asta Cita 1. Reproductive health education and stunting prevention programs implemented by the government show inequality and higher with inequality, with higher concentrations in urban areas. Rural areas that have an urgent need for intervention are still not receiving the attention they deserve.

2. Policies that can be implemented to improve the optimization of legal and human rights protection for child marriage and stunting perpetrators in Gorontalo Province

One of the Human Rights is the rights of the child, according to Article 1 number 12 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, which must be guaranteed, protected, and fulfilled by parents, families, communities, the state, the government, and local governments.²⁵

Indonesia has ratified a number of international conventions that emphasize the protection of children's rights, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but their implementation on the ground has not reached the expected level. Although many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations work with governments to raise public awareness about the adverse effects of underage marriage. However, this effort has not been fully successful.²⁶

This will have an impact on the policies that the government continues to make both at the central and regional levels to achieve the goal of reducing the child marriage rate. This will also have an impact on implementation in the field due to preventive practices. Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Child Marriage regulates child marriage throughout Indonesia.²⁷

Sanctions for the crime of child marriage have not been applied consistently and effectively at the implementation level. Until now, legal institutions such as the police and the judiciary have not seen marriage, especially child marriage, as something that should be seriously considered in the context of domestic violence or coercion. Although the impact it has is significant, it mainly impacts child development, children's mental health, and the stability of the families involved.²⁸

According to Law No. 16 of 2019, the court is currently the only institution that is given absolute authority to grant permission for deviation of marital age. For adherents of Islam,

²⁵ Junaidi, "Legal Protection of Children's Rights in Indonesia," *Jolsic Journal*, 2021, doi:<https://dx.doi.org/10.20961/jolsic.v8i1.48698>.

²⁶ I Komang Agus Wismantara Tri et al., "The Law of Underage Marriage and Its Implications for Human Rights," *Journal of Innovation Research and Knowledge* 4, no. 6 (2024).

²⁷ Titing Sugiarti and Kunthi Tridewiyanti, "Implications and Implementation of Child Marriage Prevention," *Journal of Legal Reasoning* 4, no. 1 (2021).

²⁸ Budi Setiawan, "Legal Challenges and Protection of Children's Rights: An Analysis of Underage Marriage," *Ar-Syar'i: Journal of Family Guidance & Counseling* 6, no. 2 (2024): 1915–24, doi:[10.47476/assyari.v6i2.6793](https://doi.org/10.47476/assyari.v6i2.6793).

marriage dispensation can be submitted to the Religious Court, while for believers of other religions, it can be submitted to the District Court.²⁹

Child marriage and stunting are interrelated and affect each other. Child marriage has many negative effects, one of which is increasing the likelihood of children born from the marriage suffering from stunting. So it is necessary to have a policy or program to overcome these two things.

The stunting intervention action plan includes a simple and responsive stunting index model as a part. In addition, this model will help decision-makers in making, implementing, and evaluating stunting control policies in the future.³⁰

The stunting prevention and control policy was enacted six years ago, the WPR approach was used to analyze it. The stunting rate is still high. This method is used to identify the key policy issues you want to solve, as well as the reasons behind those issues.³¹

Through Presidential Decree No. 72 of 2021, the President of the Republic of Indonesia stipulates that efforts to accelerate stunting reduction in Indonesia must include special and sensitive interventions that are implemented in a convergent, holistic, integrative, and quality manner through multi-sector and multi-stakeholder cooperation at the center, regions, and villages.³² Measure how effective some aspects of the program are when the functions and tasks of the implementer are carried out in accordance with the program plan. This shows that the success of the program depends heavily on how effective the program itself is.³³

Child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province are two important issues that are interrelated and have a long-term impact on the quality of human resources. Facts on the ground show that early marriage still occurs and contributes greatly to the high rate of stunting, even though national laws have set minimum age limits for marriage and children's rights to health and education. This shows that legal protection and the fulfillment of human rights for children are still lacking. Therefore, to overcome this main problem, a directed, comprehensive, and rights-based policy is needed. This policy must cover cultural, social, and economic aspects, and involve communities, religious institutions, and local governments.

Policies should not only be based on legislation, but also consider local social and cultural circumstances, access to education, quality of health services, and community participation. Therefore, to ensure that legal protection and children's rights are truly implemented in Gorontalo Province, it is necessary to create a series of strategic policies that are measurable, sustainable, and

²⁹ Levana Safira, Sonny Dewi Judiasih, and Deviana Yuanitasari, "Legal Protection of Children Who Enter Into Underage Marriage Without Marriage Dispensation from the Court," *Acta Diurnal Journal of Notary and PPAT-An Law* 4, no. 2 (June 30, 2021), doi:10.23920/acta.v4i2.521.

³⁰ Zenderi Wardani et al., "An Alternative: The Stunting Index as an Evaluation of Stunting Toddler Intervention Policies in Indonesia," *GIZI INDONESIA: Journal of The Indonesian Nutrition Association* 44, no. 1 (March 31, 2021): 21–30, doi:10.36457/gizindo.v44i1.535.

³¹ Made Agus Sugianto, "Analysis of Stunting Prevention and Control Policies in Indonesia: With the What Is The Problem Represented To Be?," *EMBISS: Journal of Economics, Management, Business and Social* 1, no. 3 (2021): 197–209, <https://embiss.com/index.php/embiss>.

³² Aji Primanto and Linda Puspitasari, "Policies to Reduce Stunting Rates in Indonesia," *Berajah Journal: Journal of Learning and Self-Development* 4, no. 2 (2024), doi:10.47353/bj.v4i2.332.

³³ Suci Rahmadani and Syofiaty Lubis, "Evaluation of the Government's Role in Determining Stunting Rates Based on Presidential Decree 72 of 2021," *EDUCATIO Journal: Indonesian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (May 23, 2023): 188, doi:10.29210/1202322804.

contextual. Of course, this policy must be in line with existing regulations, both Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning child protection, Law Number 36 of 2009 concerning Health, and related laws.

Reducing child marriage is an important first step in the fight against stunting.³⁴ Therefore, it is necessary to have policies that can be applied in improving the optimization of legal and human rights protection for perpetrators of child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo Province.

The policies are: (1) There is an initiative from the Regional Government in issuing a Regional Regulation on the prevention of child marriage and stunting. The proposed regional regulation contains a ban on child marriage if it is not too urgent and regulates stunting prevention strategies. The Regional Regulation also contains administrative sanctions and things that need to be implemented by the village/sub-district government, KUA, and other institutions related to these two matters. (2) Tightening and Supervising the Issuance of Marriage Dispensation, in this case there needs to be a psychological examination of children, reproductive health, until a recommendation from the Women and Children Protection Office is needed. It is also necessary for an independent institution that can supervise the issuance of this marriage dispensation, whether it is supervised, there are those who issue or perpetrators of child marriage. (3) there is a strengthening of education or socialization related to Law and Human Rights, this activity can be carried out in schools, Islamic boarding schools, or in the community in order to increase awareness about the dangers of child marriage, rights that must be obtained by children in the form of educational rights, health to protection, in the community can also be added about discussions on how to prevent stunting. (4) Strengthening the role of the Child Protection Institution and the Women and Children Protection Office (PPPA), in this case the local government can allocate budget funds, so that this institution is able to provide legal assistance to children who marry, assist children in restoring their rights, to monitor or supervise the risk of stunting in children resulting from early marriage, the government can also add competent human resources so that this institution runs properly and optimally. (5) Integration of cross-sectoral programs, local governments form teams that are able to collaborate and elaborate 1 (one) with each other in terms of coordination of child protection and stunting prevention, The related agencies that are able to solve this problem are the Health Office, the Women and Children Protection Office, the Religious Court, KUA, the Education Office, Schools to religious leaders and traditional leaders. (6) Considering that this is the modern era, it is necessary to build a digital information system that provides information about child marriage and stunting, this system must be accessible to all circles of society, both general and disabled. This system also contains stunting prevention. (7) The involvement of traditional and religious leaders in the prevention of child marriage. (8) Evaluation by local governments regarding cases of child marriage and stunting to evaluation of programs run by relevant agencies. So that if there is an ineffectiveness of the program, it can be improved and improved until it runs optimally.

Because there are many obstacles in the implementation of stunting reduction policies in Indonesia, rapid stunting reduction is a challenge. Among these obstacles include coordination and survey problems between government agencies, several policies that do not achieve the target, problems with standardization of health services and training of health workers, and governance

³⁴ Fibriyanti Karim and Mohamad Akuba, "Legal Strategies in Handling Child Marriage as a Factor Causing Stunting in Boalemo Regency," *Ganec Suara* 18, no. 4 (2024): 2167–74.

problems, such as how villages can maximize the use of blood center budgets to target stunting. In addition, stunting is a long-term nutritional problem in which insufficient nutritional intake in children causes their growth and development to be disrupted. Improved diet and parenting patterns, maintenance of healthy and clean sanitation, improved quality of food nutrition, and government programs to reduce stunting are all necessary to combat stunting. In Indonesia, stunting prevention continues to be carried out and promoted by the government, despite obstacles in the implementation of stunting reduction policies.³⁵ Therefore, with the low stunting rate in Indonesia, the quality of the next generation is expected to be better.³⁶

Inadequacies in coordination and synergy between sectors, including educational, health, law enforcement, and indigenous leaders, contribute to the ineffectiveness of efforts to protect the law and prevent child marriage. This problem has various dimensions and requires a comprehensive approach to support the achievement of superior, healthy, and competitive quality human resources, in line with Asta Cita 1's goals.

This research is a research that passed the National Grant Context Research organized by the DPPM of the Ministry of Education and Science in the Beginner Lecturer Research scheme. So the author would like to thank the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM) as part of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (KemdiktiSaintek) which organizes funding programs for research and community service activities at public and private universities. Hopefully this research will be useful and impactful for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The implementation of legal and human rights protection for child marriage and stunting in Gorontalo still faces various obstacles. Law No. 16 of 2019 sets the minimum age of marriage at 19 years, the practice of marriage dispensation is still high due to cultural, economic, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy factors. This shows the weak supervision and effectiveness of the law. Child marriage also violates children's rights to education, health, and protection, and contributes to stunting due to the physical and mental unpreparedness of young mothers. In addition, there is a lack of integration of cross-sector programs, low public awareness, and the lack of role of religious and traditional leaders. Policies that can be implemented include: the issuance of a Regional Regulation on the prevention of child marriage and stunting; tightening the marriage dispensation with psychological examination and independent supervision; legal and human rights education in schools and communities; strengthening the role and budget for the PPPA Office and Child Protection Institutions; cross-sectoral integration between related agencies; the development of an inclusive digital information system; involvement of traditional and religious leaders; as well as routine evaluation of programs and cases so that policies run optimally. Legal protection and human rights require strengthening through better implementation of regulations, effective community empowerment, and synergy between institutions to ensure that the substance of Asta Cita 1 can be achieved in an effective and sustainable manner.

³⁵ Lalu Kekah Prasetya Budi, "Tantangan Menuju Prevalensi Stunting 14%: Mengapa Penurunan Prevalensi Stunting Dalam 2 Tahun Terakhir (Tahun 2021 Dan 2022) Sangat Kecil Di Indonesia ?," *Jurnal Keluarga Berencana*, March 23, 2024, doi:<https://doi.org/10.37306/1tzxzc02>.

³⁶ Aria Putra Yuda et al., "Literature Review: The Development of Stunting Control Programs in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Health Epidemiology* 6, no. 2 (January 10, 2023), doi:10.7454/epidkes.v6i2.6049.

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