

# **The role of Islamic faith-based institutions in collaborative governance to prevent stunting in Indonesia**

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## Abstract

The dynamics of collaborative governance in accelerating stunting reduction in Madiun City involve various key actors, primarily the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS), the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS), and the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). This situation indicates that Islamic faith-based institutions have a strong contribution to supporting the government in improving public health and creating a quality generation of Muslim society. This study aims to explore the role of BAZNAS and KUA in collaborative governance efforts to accelerate stunting reduction in Madiun City. This research was conducted using a case study approach through in-depth interviews with 49 TPPS actors at the city, sub-district, and village levels, as well as representatives from BAZNAS and KUA. The results show that KUA contributes through communicating religion-based behavior change to prospective brides, teenagers, and religious communities. Meanwhile, BAZNAS implements a zakat-based program that provides economic and environmental support for vulnerable families. The implementation of collaborative governance involving the government and Islamic institutions is in accordance with the Medina Charter drafted by the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasizes cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve community welfare. The involvement of BAZNAS is also in line with the values of Islamic teachings, which hold that zakat is a social instrument for community welfare. Education conducted by the KUA strengthens the community's foundation in building a harmonious, loving, and compassionate household. Collaboration involving religious institutions offers a culturally grounded and sustainable approach to achieving targets in SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), particularly in Muslim-majority contexts.

Dinamika *collaborative governance* dalam upaya percepatan penurunan stunting di Kota Madiun melibatkan peran berbagai aktor kunci, utamanya Tim Percepatan Penurunan Stunting (TPPS), Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS), dan Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA). Kondisi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa instansi agama Islam memiliki kontribusi yang kuat untuk dalam mendukung pemerintah meningkatkan kesehatan masyarakat dan mewujudkan generasi Islami yang berkualitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran BAZNAS dan KUA dalam *collaborative governance* upaya percepatan penurunan stunting di Kota Madiun. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan Studi Kasus melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 49 aktor TPPS di tingkat kota, kecamatan, dan kelurahan, serta perwakilan dari

BAZNAS dan KUA. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa KUA berkontribusi pada pencegahan stunting melalui komunikasi perubahan perilaku berbasis agama kepada calon pengantin, remaja, dan komunitas keagamaan. Sementara itu, BAZNAS melaksanakan program berbasis zakat yang memberikan dukungan ekonomi dan lingkungan bagi keluarga rentan. Implementasi *collaborative governance* yang melibatkan pemerintah dan lembaga keagamaan sesuai dengan Piagam Madinah yang disusun oleh Nabi Muhammad SAW, yang menekankan kerjasama lintas sektor untuk mewujudkan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Pelibatan BAZNAS juga sejalan dengan nilai yang terkandung dalam ajaran Islam bahwa zakat adalah instrumen sosial untuk kesejahteraan masyarakat. Edukasi yang dilakukan oleh KUA menguatkan fondasi masyarakat dalam membangun rumah tangga yang sakinah, mawaddah, warrahmah. Kolaborasi melibatkan lembaga keagamaan yang menawarkan pendekatan yang berlandaskan budaya dan berkelanjutan untuk mencapai target dalam SDG 3 (Kesehatan dan Kesejahteraan yang Baik), SDG 1 (Pengentasan Kemiskinan), dan SDG 17 (Kemitraan untuk Mencapai Tujuan), khususnya dalam konteks mayoritas Muslim.

**Kata kunci:** *Collaborative Governance*; Stunting; BAZNAS; KUA; Islamic Institution; Well-being

## Introduction

Stunting is widely recognized as a global indicator of childhood linear growth retardation, which affects not only children's physical growth but also their cognitive development, long-term productivity, and the quality of human resources.<sup>1</sup> Even though the prevalence has decreased globally in recent decades, it remains unacceptably high in some developing nations.<sup>2</sup> In Indonesia, where over 87% of the population identifies as Muslim, the persistence of stunting poses not only a public health challenge but also

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<sup>1</sup>Ashraf Soliman, et al., "Early and Long-term Consequences of Nutritional Stunting: From Childhood to Adulthood", *Acta Biomed*, Volume 92, Number 1 (021), 1-12.

<sup>2</sup>Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, et al., "How countries can Reduce Child Stunting at Scale: Lessons from Exemplar Countries", *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Volume 112, Supplement 2 (2020), 894S-904S.

a threat to the future quality and resilience of the Muslim generation.<sup>3</sup> A physically and cognitively stunted generation may face limitations in educational attainment, economic participation, and even religious practice, all of which are fundamental to the development of a prosperous Muslim society.<sup>1</sup>

Stunting is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically the second goal, which aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 and achieve food security.<sup>4</sup> Despite a downward trend in recent years, Indonesia continues to face significant barriers to achieving its national target of reducing stunting prevalence to 14% by 2024, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021. These challenges include inadequate nutritional intake during the first 1,000 days of life, limited access to basic health services, unsafe water and sanitation, and poor infant and young child feeding practices.<sup>5</sup> Family economy is also a dominant factor in determining stunting in children, and a study of priority areas for stunting intervention is needed, which is adjusted to the capabilities of the government and cross-sectoral stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

Reducing stunting in Indonesia thus requires not only a multisectoral approach—spanning health, agriculture, education, sanitation, and social protection—but also the meaningful involvement of faith-based

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<sup>3</sup>Samarinda Central Statistic Agency, “Religion in Indonesia”, Samarinda Central Statistic Agency, 2024, <https://samarindakota.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/1/MzI0IzE=/agama-di-indonesia-2024.html>.

<sup>4</sup>SDG 2030 Indonesia. “Definition of Sustainable Development”, SDG 2030 Indonesia, 2017, <https://sdg2030indonesia.org/#modallconDefinition>

<sup>5</sup>Sri Juni Woro Astuti, et al., “Modeling Environmental Interactions and Collaborative Interventions for Childhood Stunting: A case from Indonesia”, *Dialogues in Health*, Volume 6, Number 100206 (2025), 1-11.

<sup>6</sup>Yuli Puspita Devi, et al., “Spatial Analysis of Stunting Prevalence According to Family Data Collection Indicators in Indonesia”, *Media Publikasi Promosi Kesehatan Indonesia (MPPKI)*, Volume 8, Number 3 (2025), 210-220.

organizations that hold strong cultural and moral influence in society.<sup>7</sup> Recognizing this, the Indonesian government has established the TPPS (Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team) at national and regional levels, including in Madiun City, which has been actively integrating cross-sectoral efforts to address stunting. These efforts include strengthening the TPPS, delivering integrated nutrition services at community health centers, and mobilizing stakeholders across government and community-based sectors.<sup>8</sup>

Islamic institutions such as BAZNAS (the zakat management agency) and KUA (the Office of Religious Affairs) play an increasingly critical role. BAZNAS provides economic support and nutrition aid through the distribution of zakat, infaq, and alms to underprivileged families, directly contributing to food security and poverty alleviation—two underlying determinants of stunting.<sup>9,10</sup> KUA leverages its authority in premarital counseling and Islamic education to disseminate stunting-prevention messages to prospective couples, thus promoting awareness and behavioral change from an early stage of family life. Their active involvement not only strengthens the legitimacy and outreach of stunting reduction efforts but also aligns public health messages with Islamic values, thereby enhancing their acceptance in the community.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>UNICEF and The Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency of Indonesia, *Formative Evaluation of The National Strategy to Accelerate Stunting Prevention*, Jakarta, 2023.

<sup>8</sup>Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 72 Year 2021 *The Acceleration of Stunting Reduction*, Pub. L. No. 72.

<sup>9</sup>Fita Nur Faizah, "Optimizing Zakāt Management as an Effort to Alleviate Poverty: A Case Study at the Central Java Baznas", *Journal of Islamic Economics Management and Business*, Volume 4, Number 1, (2022), 79-92.

<sup>10</sup>Dewi Aisyah F.P and Imam Mukhlis, "The Role of Zakat in Food Security in Regional Economic Development", *Jurnal Ekonomi, Bisnis, dan Pendidikan*, Volume 2, Number 1 (2022), 79-90.

<sup>11</sup>Aldi Kasanova and Heri Firmansyah, "Solution to Stunting Prevention Through Premarital Counseling: A Maṣlaḥah-Based Approach in Kampung Rakyat, Labuhanbatu Selatan", *Al-Risalah Jurnal Ilmu Syariah dan Hukum*, Volume 24, Number 2 (2024), 119-133.

The concept of collaborative governance (CG) is highly relevant to this context. CG emphasizes principled engagement, mutual trust, and joint capacity for action among stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, including religious and secular institutions.<sup>12</sup> Previous studies in Indonesia have demonstrated that CG can be a powerful framework for overcoming fragmentation and fostering sustained collaboration in local-level health interventions.<sup>13</sup> This study aimed to explore the role of BAZNAS and KUA in collaborative governance efforts to accelerate stunting reduction in Madiun City. By highlighting the strategic integration of Islamic institutions into collaborative governance, this study seeks to contribute to a more culturally grounded, inclusive, and sustainable approach to stunting prevention—one that safeguards the physical, intellectual, and spiritual well-being of Indonesia’s future Muslim generation.

### **Medina charter**

TPPS in Madiun City is developed at three levels of government, including city, sub-district, and village. These three levels have distinct roles yet are interconnected. The city-level TPPS serves as a strategic guide and evidence-based policy formulator, the district-level TPPS acts as a regional coordination hub, and the village-level TPPS is more operational as it directly interacts with the community. Within this framework, BAZNAS and KUA serve as collaborative partners, adding a crucial layer to the religious, social, and spiritual dimensions of CG.

Referring to the CG model, the success of collaboration is determined by six components: initial conditions, facilitative leadership, institutional

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<sup>12</sup>Kirk Emerson, “Collaborative Governance of Public Health in Low- And Middle-Income Countries: Lessons from Research In Public Administration”, *BMJ Global Health*, Volume 3, Supplement 4, (2018), e000381

<sup>13</sup>Ane Permatasari and Bhakti Gusti Walinegoro, “Collaborative Governance in Realizing Smart Society as a Sustainable Stunting Reduction Effort in Sleman Regency”, *E3S Web of Conferences*, Volume 440, Number 01010 (2023), 1-13.

design, collaboration processes, and outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Regarding initial conditions, the presence of KUA and BAZNAS as institutions with extensive community networks and strong social-religious values serves as a crucial asset. Embedding Islamic strategic management principles, such as *maslahah* (public benefit), *amanah* (trust), *‘adl* (justice), and *syura* (consultation) into CG frameworks can enhance legitimacy, trust, and accountability. This approach aligns health interventions with the communities’ ethical and spiritual.<sup>15</sup> KUA has long been involved in cross-sector forums, particularly through religious counselors who guide prospective brides and grooms, school-age youth, and engage in community outreach.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, BAZNAS has a history of collaboration with various parties through social and economic assistance programs targeting vulnerable groups, including families at risk of stunting.<sup>17</sup> The use of Islamic social finance instruments (e.g., *zakat*, *waqf*, *sadaqah*) can provide alternative funding streams for stunting reduction programs, especially for vulnerable populations.<sup>18</sup>

Facilitative leadership is evident not only from the Mayor and Regional Secretary, the main initiators, but also from the Head of KUA and the BAZNAS leadership, who actively build communication, participate in TPPS forums, and fulfill their respective roles within institutional capacity. KUA, for example, plays an agent of change from a spiritual and educational perspective, leveraging religious forums to convey health and

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<sup>14</sup>Chris Ansell and Alison Gash, “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice”, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Volume 18, Number 4 (2008), 543-571.

<sup>15</sup>Luthfi Dwi Risyanda, et al., “Integrating Islamic Strategic Management in the Governance of BPJS Kesehatan: Between Ethical Values and Institutional Effectiveness”, *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Volume 6, Number 6 (2025): 11739-11745.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with UN on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2025.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with MH on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

<sup>18</sup>Evren Tok, et al., “Sustainable Development Goals and Islamic Social Finance: From Policy Divide to Policy Coherence and Convergence”, *Sustainability*, Volume 14, Number 11 (2022), 1-23.

nutrition messages in some of its materials.<sup>16</sup> BAZNAS, on the other hand, supports economic aspects and improvements to the physical environment of target households, such as through productive business assistance and renovations of uninhabitable homes for extremely poor families.<sup>17</sup> Facilitative leadership by local government heads has led to the emergence of creative partnerships with religious organizations, resulting in significant reductions in stunting rates. These leaders act as mediators and motivators, ensuring that all parties are engaged and that CG principles are upheld.<sup>19</sup>

In terms of institutional design, although the KUA and BAZNAS are not part of the technical department's structural framework, both have been integrated into the TPPS structure through regular coordination and communication forums.<sup>20</sup> Collaboration processes occur through cross-sectoral discussion forums and case management. This process is considered sufficiently deliberative and opens space for inter-agency discussion. In terms of outcomes, the contributions of BAZNAS and KUA have had positive impacts, particularly in addressing cases involving economic, spiritual, and educational dimensions. KUA's value-based interventions have increased awareness among prospective parents and adolescents about the importance of family health. Meanwhile, BAZNAS's economic assistance programs have supported the resilience of target households. The institutional design of religious organizations and governance for stunting reduction under CG is characterized by formalized partnerships, shared leadership, and integration of religious values with public health goals. This design enables leveraging the community trust and resources of religious organizations alongside the government's policy and technical capacity, creating a synergistic approach to effectively reduce stunting.<sup>19,21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ane Permatasari, et al., "Stunting Prevention Through Collaborative Governance in the Berbah Sub-district, Sleman", ICOSI-HESS, ASSEHR 710 (2022), 618-628.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with MH on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

<sup>21</sup>Rojali, et al., "Exploring the Influence of Religious Institutions on the Implementation

One historical reference that can serve as a normative foundation for collaborative governance practices in Islam is the Charter of Medina (Mitsaq al-Madinah). Drafted by the Prophet Muhammad SAW after his migration to Medina, this Charter exemplifies an early socio-political document that organised the lives of a multicultural and multi-religious society within an inclusive, fair, and participatory system. In this context, the values contained in the Charter of Medina reflect the main principles of contemporary collaborative governance, which emphasise cross-sectoral cooperation in resolving complex public issues.<sup>22</sup>

In the context of accelerating stunting reduction in Madiun City, the synergy between TPPS (government), BAZNAS, and KUA can be seen as a form of implementing the values contained in the Madinah Charter. Just as the society of Madinah was at that time, Madiun City is a diverse social space where the success of public programs requires cross-sectoral participation and stakeholder involvement. The inclusivity principles and roles distribution in the Medina Charter can be interpreted as the division of TPPS' functions as a cross-sector coordinator, BAZNAS as a provider of zakat-based funding support for poor groups, and KUA as a reinforcer of family values and premarital education. This principle is in line with the spirit of the articles of the Charter, which guarantee the rights and obligations of the community in a balanced manner.<sup>23</sup>

Moral and spiritual values, such as trust, deliberation, justice, and mutual assistance (ta'awun) form the ethical foundation of inter-institutional collaboration. Collaboration is not merely technical work

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of Technology for Stunting Understanding”, *Aptisi Transactions on Technopreneurship (ATT)*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2024), 1-12.

<sup>22</sup>Ahmad Zayyadi, “History of the Constitution of Medina by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Analysis of the Madinah Charter and Its Relevance in Indonesia)”. *Supremasi Hukum: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2015), 178-198.

<sup>23</sup>Rooby Pangestu Hari Mulyo, “Medina Charter: Religious And State Missions”. *OASIS: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Islam*, Volume 7, Number 2 (2023).

but also part of a religious mission to create a healthy and prosperous society. Formal mechanisms such as social charters or written agreements, which were an important aspect of the Medina Charter, can be reflected in modern practices in the form of cross-sector MoUs, joint decrees, or TPPS coordination forums. This is important to ensure the sustainability of programs, particularly interventions involving the distribution of zakat by BAZNAS and family education by KUA.<sup>24</sup>

### **Strengthening the foundation of the household**

The KUA in Madiun City demonstrates active and strategic involvement in TPPS at both the city and sub-district levels. Although the Head of KUA cannot always attend TPPS forums in person, religious counsellors are appointed permanent representatives who play an important role in counselling and education in the community. The KUA's role is particularly prominent in religion-based behavioral change communication, which is regularly conveyed through pre-marriage counseling, religious preaching, and religious community forums.<sup>25</sup>

One of the KUA's main approaches is pre-marriage counselling for prospective couples, which has been conducted independently at the KUA since 2023. In these sessions, religious counselors from the KUA in Madiun City provide guidance that integrates religious, health, and family preparation aspects into marriage guidance for prospective brides and grooms. The provided material emphasised spiritual quotient (SQ) as the main foundation for building a family that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *warrmah* (harmonious, loving, and compassionate). The counsellor began the session by reminding participants of the meaning of human

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<sup>24</sup>Ahmad Zayyadi, "History of the Constitution of Medina by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Analysis of the Madinah Charter and Its Relevance in Indonesia)". *Supremasi Hukum: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2015), 178-198.

<sup>25</sup>Interview with UN on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2025.

creation, namely to worship Allah, and the importance of faith in building a household. The discussion then moved on to reproductive health, nutritional preparation, and the importance of halal work and economic responsibility as manifestations of the head of the family's responsibilities.<sup>25</sup>

Brides-to-be are also educated about the concept of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah* as powerful tools for improving family quality and preventing stunting. By fostering tranquility, love, and mercy within families, such education nurtures not only physical health but also emotional and spiritual well-being. The Quran and Hadith provide clear guidance on parental responsibilities, such as breastfeeding for two years and providing halal, nutritious food, which are essential for preventing stunting and fostering healthy growth.<sup>26</sup> Studies highlight that Islamic values such as maintaining health (*hifz al-nafs*), parental responsibility, hygiene living, and consuming halal and wholesome food form a strong foundation for stunting prevention efforts.<sup>27</sup> These responsibilities align with broader Qur'anic principles, including the call in QS. Al-Baqarah: 168 to consume what is halal and *tayyib*, offering both religious and nutritional guidance.

QS. Al-Baqarah: 168 states, "O mankind, eat from what is lawful (*halal*) and good (*tayyib*) on the earth..."—implicitly calling for food that is not only religiously permissible but also clean, nutritious, and safe. Islamic scholarly interpretations emphasize that *tayyib* encompasses food hygiene, nutritional quality, and overall health benefits, ensuring that what is consumed supports both physical and spiritual well-being.<sup>28</sup> Contemporary reviews

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<sup>26</sup>Sri Astuti A. Samad, et al., "Islamic Educational Approaches to Stunting Prevention and Child Protection", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2024),163-174.

<sup>27</sup>Rumadani Sagala, et al., "Prevention of Stunting in Children from an Islamic Perspective in the City of Bandar Lampung", *AKM: Aksi Kepada Masyarakat*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2023), 109-122.

<sup>28</sup>Siti Fatimahwati P.D.M and Hairul Azrin Besar, "Halal and Tayyiban Food Security: The Way Forward for Brunei Darussalam", in Rozaidah Idris, et al (eds.) *The Halal Industry in Asia*, Singapore: Springer, 2025.

note that many halal-certified products meet legal requirements but may fall short in nutritional and quality standards if *tayyib* criteria are not rigorously applied.

In practice, the concept of *halal* is often narrowly interpreted as mere permissibility, while the equally important principle of *tayyib* is frequently overlooked. This limited understanding may lead to the consumption of foods that are legally permissible but nutritionally inadequate, particularly among families with limited nutrition and health literacy. In the context of stunting prevention, such misconceptions pose a significant barrier to ensuring optimal child growth and development.<sup>29</sup> Studies show that diets based on natural, minimally processed foods—which meet *tayyib* standards—are associated with reduced chronic disease risk and better immune function in children.<sup>30</sup> In a country where stunting persists among Muslim-majority communities, this disconnect is not merely theological—it is profoundly consequential. Parents must move beyond surface labels and embrace *halal* and *tayyib* not as symbolic ideals, but as divine responsibilities entrusted with the future of their children.<sup>31</sup>

Additionally, the KUA runs the Youth Guidance Program for School-Age Youth (BRUS) and the Youth Guidance Program for Marriage-Age Youth (BRUN), targeting adolescents from junior high school through university. This program introduces issues related to the appropriate age for marriage, moral responsibility, reproductive readiness, and the importance of healthy family planning based on Islamic values. In religious

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<sup>29</sup>Sirajuddin, et al., “The Intervention of Maternal Nutrition Literacy Has the Potential to Prevent Childhood Stunting: Randomized Control Trials”, *Journal of Public Health Research*. Volume 10, Number 2 (2021), 1-5.

<sup>30</sup>Melissa Bujtor, et al., “Associations of Dietary Intake on Biological Markers of Inflammation in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review:”, *Nutrients*, Volume 13, Number 2 (2021): 1-29.

<sup>31</sup>Ana Paula K. G, et al., “Dietary Patterns and Associated Factors of Children Under Two Years of Age Born Prematurely”, *Revista Paulista de Pediatria*, Volume 6, Number 40 (2022), e2021177.

study forums, KUA counselors also incorporate educational messages about maternal and child health, nutrition, and a healthy household environment.<sup>32</sup>

The informant UN revealed that she regularly conveys messages on stunting prevention to the congregation of the majelis taklim (Islamic study group) she leads. “[...] I often talk about stunting prevention at the majelis taklim that I lead and accompany. I convey the importance of halal food and maternal health through the majelis taklim. That’s all I do.” This statement indicates that education about stunting is conveyed through an Islamic values-based approach, such as the importance of consuming halal food and maternal health, which is relevant to the religious-cultural context of Madiun society.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to targeting mothers through religious study groups, the KUA also seeks to educate teenagers through the BRUS program. Although it does not directly address stunting, the material presented emphasises the importance of delaying marriage as a preventive strategy. In this regard, the informant explained: “The religious study group that I lead exists. Around 8 gatherings, all in the Taman sub-district... There are also those specifically for teenagers. Teenager development is there; if teenagers aren’t stunted, what’s the material, but raising the marriage age... for example, if they marry before reaching the legal age, like under 19 years old, the dangers are like this and so on.”<sup>32</sup>

Through these activities, the KUA not only conveys moral messages but also introduces the health and social risks of early marriage, thereby indirectly contributing to the prevention of stunting in future generations. This strategy aligns with a religion-based behavioural change communication approach, in which health messages are communicated through religious narratives that are well accepted in the community. The Majelis Taklim serves as a strategic space to convey information to mothers,

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<sup>32</sup>Interview with UN on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2025.

who play a crucial role in child rearing and nutrition, while BRUS serves as a platform to instill family-readiness values among adolescents from school age onward.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the involvement of KUA in the administrative aspects of health should be reflected in its support for the implementation of the ELSIMIL application. The Health Office acknowledges that the KUA has a role in directing prospective brides and grooms to create accounts and fill out Electronic Marriage and Pregnancy Readiness (ELSIMIL) before getting married.<sup>33</sup> Previous studies show that the KUA in Banawa, Donggala Regency, plays an important role in accelerating stunting reduction by requiring health screening and ELSIMIL examination for brides and grooms.<sup>34</sup> However, the KUA in Madiun City emphasizes that its role is primarily administrative, with less focus on the technical implementation of health checks. An informant, the UN, said, *“For ELSIMIL, filling it out is the domain of the Health Office. Every health check-up requires the filling out of ELSIMIL by the Primary Health Centre, while the KUA needs the results of the check-up (a certificate stating whether she is pregnant or not).”*<sup>35</sup>

In-depth interview data with prospective brides and grooms, service users of the Madiun City KUA, show that the administrative process of marriage registration was thorough, brief, and straightforward. They also received guidance on various aspects of married life and a marriage guidebook. However, they have not received any information related to ELSIMIL.<sup>36</sup> This finding shows that there is a gap between the Health Office and the KUA regarding the role of the KUA in the socialization of

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<sup>33</sup>Interview with MH on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

<sup>34</sup>Susi Susilawati, et al., “Office of Religious Affairs Banawa’s Efforts in Minimizing Stunting Cases in Donggala Regency”, *Jurnal Fakultas Hukum Universitas Malikussaleh*, Volume 12, Number 2 (2024), 343-361.

<sup>35</sup>Interview with UN on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

<sup>36</sup>Interview with AG on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025.

ELSIMIL. Based on previous research, it was also found that there were significant variations in brides-to-be's understanding and experience with the ELSIMIL application. This variation in understanding is largely due to the lack of effective and consistent counseling from relevant parties, such as the village government, Primary Health Center, and Family Planning Field Counselor (PLKB).<sup>37</sup>

Elsimil is a digital innovation from BKKBN that supports the acceleration of stunting reduction in Indonesia. This application is designed to screen the health of prospective brides and grooms, provide education on nutrition and reproductive readiness, and issue marriage and pregnancy eligibility certificates as administrative requirements. Elsimil is important in family development because it emphasises physical, psychological, and social readiness, rather than just administrative requirements, to form healthy families free from stunting.<sup>38</sup>

From an Islamic perspective, the implementation of ELSIMIL has profound relevance to the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, namely the main objectives of Islamic law in protecting five fundamental things: religion (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*). Previous research examining the implementation of ELSIMIL at the KUA in Medan Tembung District shows that the policy requiring prospective brides and grooms to complete and pass ELSIMIL certification is a form of protection for offspring (*hifz al-nasl*) and life (*hifz al-nafs*). This effort also serves as a preventive measure against the emergence of a generation vulnerable to health issues, including stunting, which can impair the

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<sup>37</sup>Rosdalina Bukido, et al., "Integrating Marriage Administration with Reproductive Health to Prevent Stunting: Opportunities and Challenges in Society", *DIKTUM: Jurnal Syariah dan Hukum*, Volume 22, Number 2 (2024), 107-119.

<sup>38</sup>Ari Dermawan, "Electronic Application Ready for Marriage and Pregnancy for the Community", *Jurnal Pengabdian Harapan Bangsa*, Volume 1, Number 2 (2023).

quality of human life in the long term.<sup>39</sup>

Another study, which examined ELSIMIL from the perspective of *masalah murlah* states that the existence of an ELSIMIL certificate is a real form of providing benefits the prospective bride and groom and as a means of safeguarding offspring or (*hifzu an-nasl*). The benefit contained in ELSIMIL is a *hajiyiyāt* benefit, to make it easier for the bride and groom to prevent difficulties with unwanted health problems in order to safeguard the existence of offspring, whose nature is *darūriyyāt* (*essential necessity*).<sup>40</sup> In line with this, Zidan (2023), in his research at the KUA Way Jepara, East Lampung, emphasises that ELSIMIL is an educational tool that provides important information to prospective brides and grooms regarding pregnancy readiness, nutritional patterns, and reproductive health risks. He concludes that the existence of ELSIMIL aligns with the principle of *masalah* (*public good*) in Islam, as it benefits both individuals and society at large, and has the potential to prevent mafsadah (harm), particularly in the context of the rising rate of stunting in Indonesia.<sup>41</sup>

### **Optimization of Islamic social finance instruments “Zakat”**

The interaction between BAZNAS and TPPS reflects a unique model of institutional partnership. It combines the religious and social mandate of BAZNAS with the government-facilitated health development agenda.

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<sup>39</sup>Basith Hilmi Nasution and Zulkarnain, “Implementation of the Elsimil Application (Ready to Marry, Ready to Get Pregnant) as a Requirement for Marriage Registration from the Perspective of Maqashid Syariah: A Case Study at the Office of Religious Affairs in Medan Tembung District”, *Kabilah: Journal of Social Community*, Volume 8, Number 1 (2023), 1-13.

<sup>40</sup>Son Haji Saputra and Seno Aris Sasmito, “Elsimil Certification for Prospective Brides and Grooms as One of the Administrative Requirements for Marriage Viewed from Maṣlaḥah Mursalah”, *Jurnal Al-Hakim: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa, Studi Syariah, Hukum dan Filantropi*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2024), 29-44.

<sup>41</sup>Fadla Alfitra Zidan, A Review of Maqashid Syariah on the Elsimil Program (Ready to Marry and Ready to Get Pregnant) for Couples of Prospective Brides and Grooms (Study in the KUA District of Way Jepara, East Lampung Regency), Diploma Thesis, UIN Raden Intan Lampung: Lampung, 2024.

Although its involvement is relatively new, BAZNAS's contributions to addressing stunting cases have demonstrated the significant potential of a strategic partnership based on values and trust. One concrete example of collaboration occurred when TPPS identified families at high risk of stunting in several sub-districts, and BAZNAS was invited to provide support based on zakat and infaq. Instead of creating a new program, BAZNAS intervened through existing programs, such as Madiun Makmur (economic) and Madiun Peduli (social). This intervention is seen in the case of the Josenan neighbourhood, where BAZNAS provided sewing machines and business capital for garment production to housewives who are the breadwinners of their families and have children at risk of stunting. In another case in Banjarejo Village, BAZNAS rehabilitated an uninhabitable house owned by a family with a mentally disabled member; they also had children with nutritional vulnerabilities. In both cases, assistance was not only in the form of goods but also included empowerment efforts and active beneficiary involvement, despite implementation challenges.<sup>42</sup>

BAZNAS also helps the head of the family to get a more decent job. However, due to the limitations of the head of the family who has a mental disability, the work obtained is not carried out by the head of the family to the fullest. SK said, *"...as an alternative, his father, who was originally a scavenger, is periodically involved in working as a laborer in our partners in the physical field, such as building and other activities, but unfortunately, he is not focused. Then in that context, we also try to work with TPPS, meaning, working with the labor department, giving him haircutting skills."*<sup>47</sup>

BAZNAS plays a supporting role within a reactive and opportunity-driven framework. Rather than initiating dedicated programs for stunting, BAZNAS contributes by aligning its existing interventions with the needs identified by the local Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team

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<sup>42</sup>Interview with SK on February, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025.

(TPPS), when overlaps naturally occur. SK explained: “So, in the context of addressing stunting in Madiun City, Baznas acts as a partner to the local government, specifically the TPPS, which seeks support from Baznas whenever there is something that Baznas can address... BAZNAS’ role towards TPPS does not mean we are opening up new areas or new programs. We are simply looking for areas of overlap...”.<sup>47</sup>

This statement illustrates that BAZNAS operates through a program-convergence model rather than proactive planning. While this approach offers flexibility and responsiveness, it also suggests that BAZNAS’s engagement remains largely supplementary and situational. There is no formal mechanism or systematic integration that embeds BAZNAS as a strategic stakeholder in TPPS’s program planning and implementation. From a CG perspective, such an arrangement limits the transformative potential of cross-sectoral partnerships. Ideally, non-governmental actors like BAZNAS should not only fill gaps left by government interventions but also co-design and co-implement sustainable, targeted programs. Reliance on overlapping areas alone constrains the development of zakat-based, long-term solutions to stunting that align with both local needs and public health goals.<sup>43</sup>

The role of BAZNAZ in TPPS aligns directly with the values of Islamic teachings about zakat as a social instrument for prosperity. In the Qur’an, the social and spiritual functions of zakat are emphasised in QS. *At-Taubah* (9:103): “Take from their wealth ‘O Prophet’ charity to purify and bless them, and pray for them—surely your prayer is a source of comfort for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” This verse emphasises that zakat is not only a financial obligation but also a mechanism for spiritual purification

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<sup>43</sup>Laura Mariani, et al., “Achieving Sustainable Development Goals Through Collaborative Innovation: Evidence from Four European Initiatives”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Volume 180, Number 4 (2022),1075-1095.

(tazkiyah), and a means of creating social harmony, while cleansing the soul of stinginess and arrogance.<sup>44</sup> With zakat, a fair wealth distribution system is established, reducing the potential for social conflict due to economic inequality. Zakat becomes a bridge of togetherness and a tool for empowering marginalised communities.<sup>49</sup> The economic value of zakat is realised in its function of wealth redistribution and economic development for the community. Zakat can drive the economy by empowering mustahik (recipients) to become muzakki (givers) in the future. In the long term, zakat contributes to inclusive economic growth, reduces poverty rates, and reduces the community's dependence on consumptive social assistance. Zakat is not only a form of assistance but also a social investment that has a productive impact.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusions

This study highlights the pivotal role of Islamic faith-based institutions (BAZNAS and KUA) in CG for stunting prevention in Madiun City. KUA contributes through religion-based behavior change communication, through premarital education, adolescent counseling, and religious outreach, while BAZNAS implements zakat-funded programs addressing economic and environmental factors that influence stunting. Theoretically, these findings enrich the CG framework by illustrating the integration of religious institutions into public health strategies in Muslim-majority contexts. In practise, the study demonstrates that culturally grounded partnerships between state and faith-based actors can strengthen program sustainability and community engagement, although their impact is

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<sup>44</sup>Umar, et al., "The Values of Islamic Education in the Practice of Zakat: Unveiling the Messages of the Qur'an and Hadith", *Tarbawiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, Volume 9, Number 1 (2025), 18-41.

<sup>45</sup>Umar, et al., "The Values of Islamic Education in the Practice of Zakat: Unveiling the Messages of the Qur'an and Hadith", *Tarbawiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, Volume 9, Number 1 (2025), 18-41.

constrained by limited resources and insufficient/fragmented coordination, particularly in linking KUA and health services through systems like ELSIMIL. Future research should investigate strategies to enhance inter-institutional coordination, integrate digital tools for monitoring, and assess the scalability and long-term effects of this collaborative model on maternal and child health outcomes.

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Interview with Informants

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