

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE TEAMS IN ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF LIFE AMONG PROSPECTIVE BRIDES IN JOMBANG REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Prospective brides are a crucial group as early determinants in optimizing the First 1000 Days of Life period, which is essential in the effort to reduce stunting. They are a priority target for mentoring and reporting, serving as a foundation for maximizing the implications of this critical period. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Family Assistance Team in reducing the risk of stunting among prospective brides in Jombang Regency. A descriptive qualitative approach was used in this research, employing interviews and observations for data collection. The findings indicate that the program effectively targets prospective brides, providing assistance at least three months prior to marriage. The Family Assistance Team delivers Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) to ensure that prospective brides, who will soon become part of childbearing couples, understand the importance of optimizing the First 1000 Days of Life period. This aligns with the objectives of the Family Assistance Team formed by the National Population and Family Planning Agency, aimed at assisting prospective brides as part of the broader effort to accelerate stunting reduction by promoting awareness of the significance of the First 1000 Days of Life.

Keywords: family assistance team; first 1000 days of life; prospective brides.

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a national priority issue that requires comprehensive attention and interventions in both its prevention and management. According to Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 on the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, prospective brides and grooms are among the target groups identified as families at risk of stunting. Prospective brides, in particular, require educational support before marriage to ensure they are well-prepared to address stunting risks. Such preparation includes providing relevant materials to prospective brides and grooms, disseminating information through mass media, and conducting reproductive health counseling (Adyani et al., 2023). The knowledge imparted is expected to serve as adequate preparation for prospective mothers entering marriage, as a first step in preventing stunting at birth (Dewi et al., 2023). The readiness of prospective brides and grooms, equipped with acquired knowledge, is critical for reducing stunting risks during the First 1000 Days of Life.

The First 1000 Days of Life represents a golden period of growth and development, starting from conception and continuing until the child reaches 2 years old (Suharno et al., 2021). This period is a vital opportunity to build a strong foundation for long-term health. Therefore, it is crucial for

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engaged couples to thoroughly prepare, especially regarding their physical health, supported by adequate education. Preparing prospective brides and grooms involves premarital guidance, which includes at least three months of counseling as part of marriage services. In accordance with National Population and Family Planning Agency Regulation Number 12 of 2021, the Family Assistance Team plays a pivotal role. The Family Assistance Team provides support activities, including counseling, facilitating access to referral services, and aiding the acceptance of social assistance programs, while also conducting surveillance for families at risk of stunting, including prospective brides and grooms. The team conducts surveillance on priority targets to detect early risk factors for stunting (Suharno et al., 2021). Additionally, they utilize the website <https://elsimil-pwa.bkkbn.go.id> for data tracking and deliver Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) on stunting prevention, ensuring that the targets receive comprehensive information and are adequately prepared for marriage and subsequent pregnancy.

In Jombang Regency, there are 21 sub-districts, each with a Family Assistance Team tailored to regional needs, providing support to families at risk of stunting. According to the ELSIMIL (Electronic Ready for Marriage and Pregnancy) Assistance Dashboard for Jombang Regency from January 1 to March 31, 2024, out of 631 prospective brides and grooms, 282 have received IEC counseling from the Family Assistance Team. The highest percentage of support, in terms of providing IEC to prospective brides and grooms, was found in the sub-districts of Tembelang, Wonosalam, Bandarkedungmulyo, and Gudo. The suboptimal percentage of overall IEC facilitation in Jombang Regency is a key factor prompting this research. Previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of health promotion on the First 1000 Days of Life on the knowledge of prospective brides and grooms (Fadhilah & Agustina, 2021). However, other studies have indicated a lack of impact of stunting education on the knowledge, attitudes, and actions of Family Assistance Teams (Sari & Rahyanti, 2023). Based on these findings, this research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Family Assistance Team in enhancing the understanding of the First 1000 Days of Life among prospective brides and grooms in Jombang Regency.

METHOD

This research utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach with purposive sampling methods, conducted through interviews and observations. Primary data was collected via in-depth interviews carried out from March to June 2024, involving direct visits to the informants' residences. The research was conducted in the districts of Gudo, Tembelang, Wonosalam, and Bandarkedungmulyo in Jombang Regency. These locations were chosen based on data showing high percentages of at-risk prospective brides and grooms who had received IEC counseling from community health workers (Hardani, 2020). The research subjects consisted of unmarried prospective brides from four sampled districts who had received IEC facilitation as part of the Family Assistance Team's support. Fourteen informants, including Family Assistance Team members from various villages and sub-districts, were interviewed. Secondary data was gathered from literature studies using the website <https://elsimil-pwa.bkkbn.go.id> and general information from Family Planning Counselors.

The interviews were conducted semi-structured, with open-ended questions designed by the researchers, allowing for new questions to emerge based on the informants' responses. This approach ensured comprehensive data collection (Alijoyo et al., 2021). The data analysis followed three stages: data selection and transformation, data presentation in categorized descriptions, and the drawing of conclusions based on the formulated analysis (Audinovic & Nugroho, 2023).

RESULTS

This research was conducted in four sub-districts, namely Gudo sub-district, Tembelang sub-district, Wonosalam sub-district, and Bandarkedungmulyo sub-district in Jombang Regency from

March to June 2024. The findings from the research are summarized in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1 Research Results Data.

NUM	NAME	AGE (Years)	ADDRESS	FREQUENCY OF ASSISTANCE	INFORMATION AND EDUCATION OBTAINED DURING ASSISTANCE
1	ER	22	Wonokerto, Wonosalam	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ELSIMIL Application - the importance of consuming iron supplement tablets - Ideal body mass index
2	EN	39	Wonokerto, Wonosalam	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A good eating pattern - The Importance of Vitamin Consumption - The Risks of Exposure to Cigarette Smoke
3	NI	23	Galengdowo, Wonosalam	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ELSIMIL Application - readiness for pregnancy - the importance of consuming iron supplement tablets - Prevention of Stunting
4	AF	23	Brongkot, Bandarkedungmulyo	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Milk consumption to enhance fertility - Folic Acid - The importance of consuming iron supplements
5	UL	26	Brongkot, Bandarkedungmulyo	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructions for health check-up at the community health center
6	EM	24	Krembangan, Gudo	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Postponement of pregnancy if the upper arm circumference is not sufficient and there is anemia.
7	RK	27	Sukoiber, Gudo	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information regarding the ELSIMIL Application
8	AN	30	Brodot, Bandarkedungmulyo	3x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructions for health check-ups at the community health center - Education on the importance of consuming a lot of protein - The importance of taking iron supplement tablets

9	LI	23	Brodot, Bandarkedungmulyo	5x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructions for health check-ups at the community health center - Education regarding food consumption for health - The importance of taking iron supplement tablets
10	ED	24	Kepuhdoko, Tembelang	2x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidelines for health checks at community health centers - Guidelines for maintaining ideal body weight - The first 1000 days of life - The importance of taking iron supplement tablets - Meeting nutritional needs - Benefits of exclusive breastfeeding
11	RW	23	Tampingmojo, Tembelang	3x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The importance of health checks for prospective brides and grooms - Education on nutritious food intake - Ideal upper arm circumference - Stunting - The importance of taking iron supplement tablets - Information regarding the dangers of cigarette smoke
12	IM	24	Pucangsimo, Bandarkedungmulyo	2x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information regarding Family Planning Methods - Benefits of consuming fruits, vegetables, and nutritious foods - The first 1000 days of life
13	AN	36	Brangkal, Bandarkedungmulyo	1x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health inspection orders in Health Center

14	RD	22	Karangdagangan, Bandarkedungmulyo	1x	-	Health inspection orders in Health Center
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Source: Research Interview Results, 2024.

It is known that there are a total of 2 respondents (14.3%) who are samples from Tembelang District, 3 respondents (21.4%) who are samples from Wonosalam District, 2 respondents (14.3%) who are samples from Gudo District, and 7 respondents (50%) who are samples from Bandarkedungmulyo District. Based on the ideal marriage age classification by National Population and Family Planning Agency, which states that women should be at least 21 years old, all 14 respondents (100%) fall into the category of the ideal marriage age. The support provided by the Family Assistance Team varies for each target group. A total of 9 respondents (64.3%) received assistance once, 2 respondents (14.3%) received assistance twice, 2 respondents (14.3%) received assistance three times, and 1 respondent (7.1%) received assistance five times.

DISCUSSION

Frequency of Assistance

One indicator of suboptimal growth quality is the high prevalence of stunting. Stunting is a condition of malnutrition characterized by a height-for-age z-score below -2 Standard Deviation. The high prevalence of stunting in toddlers indicates a disruption in growth quality during the golden period. The period of the first 1000 days of life begins from the time the baby is in the womb until the first two years of life (Nurlinda et al., 2021). In an effort to address stunting, the government has issued policies to reduce stunting rates through specific nutritional interventions that refer to the Guidelines for the Implementation of Integrated Stunting Reduction Interventions in Districts/Cities published by the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas (Probohastuti & Rengga, 2019).

Interventions for expectant mothers are crucial in breaking the chain of stunting occurrence. This is stated in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, one of which can be achieved through premarital services for prospective brides and grooms (Presidential Regulation, 2021). One important factor that influences the occurrence of stunting in Indonesia is the education level of parents. If the education level of both parents increases, the risk of their child experiencing stunting will decrease by 3-5% (Soekatri et al., 2020). According to Lawrence Green's theory (1991), an individual's or community's health behavior is influenced by knowledge as a predisposition to determine a person's actions or behaviors in a tangible way (Erviana & Azinar, 2022). The statement aligns with research findings that indicate an increase in knowledge from the Family Assistance Team's information to Prospective Brides and Grooms.

The research subjects, who are prospective brides, consisted of 14 individuals, 9 of whom received support once. The assistance began by asking for the complete identity of the bride-to-be, including her full name, her partner's name, date of birth, age, height, weight, as well as upper arm circumference and hemoglobin levels. One of the informants named RK, who comes from Sukober Village in Gudo District, explained that he was only asked about his personal data along with questions regarding the results of his health examination at the community health center. After that, he did not receive any guidance or information from the family support team and did not receive any follow-up assistance after the initial support. This also happened to an informant from Brangkal Village in the Bandarkedungmulyo District named AN, who only received a visit once and was only asked for identification; no information was provided by the cadre regarding the ELSIMIL application or the actions to take when at risk of stunting due to the husband's

smoking.

Another data finding in Brongkot Village, Bandarkedungmulyo District, involves the prospective bride UL, who was only contacted via WhatsApp messages by the family assistance team cadre to undergo a check-up at the community health center. After the examination, the results were requested to be photographed and sent for data entry in the ELSIMIL application. The bride-to-be was only advised to maintain a healthy diet and avoid processed foods like meatballs. Meanwhile, the prospective brides and grooms AN, 30 years old, LI, 23 years old, ED, 24 years old, RW, 23 years old, and HM, 24 years old, who received guidance more than once gained greater knowledge and insights related to preparing to be ready for marriage and pregnancy, with an improved understanding of the first 1000 days of life. ED received assistance twice. When first visited, the bride-to-be said that the counselor suggested getting a health check at the community health center to determine if there are any risks. Then the bride-to-be was asked to download the ELSIMIL application after undergoing a health check at the community health center. The next day, the health worker visited the bride-to-be again; she showed the health check results from the community health center and mentioned that her hemoglobin level was low, specifically at 11. From the results of the examination, the family support team suggested increasing the consumption of green vegetables and taking iron supplement tablets daily during menstruation. Similarly, the prospective bride IM from Pucangsimo Village in Bandarkedungmulyo District received assistance twice. The first session involved questions about her complete identity and health examination results, while the second session provided explanations regarding personal health preparation before marriage, preparation for pregnancy, and information to be conveyed once she has children.

The effectiveness of the frequency of assistance more than once is also evident in the bride-to-be AN from Brodot Village, Bandarkedungmulyo District, who received assistance three times. In the first counseling session, the prospective bride and groom are advised to undergo health checks. In the second session, they are asked about the results of the examination, and in the third session, they are educated about the dangers of exposure to cigarette smoke for the prospective couple. Next, the prospective bride and groom from Tampingmojo Village in Tembelang District, who also received assistance three times, during the first session said, "The cadre came and provided information that I need to undergo a health check before getting married, and then the results of the examination will be used to register for the ELSIMIL certificate." In the second assistance, it was noted that the measurement of the upper arm circumference was still insufficient at 22 cm. The family assistance team cadre provided education to the prospective brides in the neighborhood to consume vegetables and meat. The third mentoring session in June for the RW bride-to-be has shown good progress; her upper arm circumference is now normal and her weight has increased by 3 kg due to following the advice from the family support team to increase her intake of nutritious food.

The effectiveness of the frequency of assistance more than once has also been proven by the prospective bride LI from Brodot Village, Bandarkedungmulyo District, who received assistance five times. In the first counseling session, the family support team suggested a health check-up first. Then, in the second counseling session, the prospective bride and groom were asked to present their health check results and were invited to fill out data in the ELSIMIL application. In the third counseling session, the prospective couple received information about the importance of consuming iron supplement tablets. The fourth visit from the family support team provided education on the importance of consuming plenty of vegetables and reducing fast food intake. Finally, in the fifth session, the prospective couple received education on preparing for married life to ensure they are truly ready for marriage and pregnancy. The results of the research indicate that the frequency of guidance affects the level of knowledge of prospective brides and grooms regarding health preparation for marriage and pregnancy, as well as the importance of the first 1000 days of life.

Education for Family Companion Teams for Prospective Brides and Grooms

The provision of nutritional interventions is not sufficient for preventing stunting, as it must be accompanied by changes in community behavior that can be achieved through interventions in the form of education (Lewa, 2021). A prospective mother's knowledge about nutrition is very important for meeting her nutritional needs. Efforts to enhance knowledge can be made by providing education or nutritional counseling, which can encourage individuals to change their attitudes and behaviors (Doloksaribu & Simatupang, 2019). Maternal education can be a predictor and can be modified to enhance growth and reduce the incidence of stunting (Krebs et al., 2022). This is supported by research related to efforts to enhance the knowledge of prospective brides and grooms in preventing stunting through nutritional education, which shows that there is a significant influence between the provision of education and the knowledge and attitudes of the prospective brides and grooms. Counseling conducted three times within a week has a significant impact ($p=0.001$) on the increase in knowledge and attitudes of premarital women regarding preconception nutrition in Batang Kuis District (Doloksaribu & Simatupang, 2019). Other research shows that there are changes in knowledge and attitudes among prospective brides after receiving nutrition education, where the average respondents have started to improve their eating habits in preparation for pregnancy based on the nutrition education provided earlier (Patata et al., 2021).

Health education aims to enhance knowledge in order to change behaviors towards a healthier lifestyle. A bride-to-be with good knowledge will influence her attitudes and behaviors in preventing stunting. Knowledge about reproductive health is also important to provide for prospective brides and grooms. Reproductive health is the starting point for the development of maternal and child health that can be prepared early on, even before a woman becomes pregnant and becomes a mother. Preconception health is a part of overall health for both women and men during their reproductive years. Preconception healthcare is useful for reducing risks and promoting a healthy lifestyle to prepare for a healthy pregnancy (Yulivantina et al., 2021). Comprehensive preconception health includes reproductive life planning related to delaying pregnancy, obstetric history, nutrition, vaccination, sexual health, chronic medical conditions, current medications, psychosocial health, and contraception. Poorly prepared pregnancies are at risk of complications that will affect the baby to be born later (Rusman et al., 2020). On the contrary, a well-planned pregnancy will have a positive impact on the condition of the prospective mother and her fetus (Rahmanindar et al., 2021).

The research results show that respondents who received education during the initial guidance by the family support team regarding the need for health check-ups at the nearest Health Facility. A total of 14 respondents (100%) underwent health checks before marriage. The pregnant woman in the early stages of pregnancy stated that before receiving support from the family assistance team, she was unaware that pregnant women needed to undergo health checks as a preventive measure against stunting. Therefore, after receiving education regarding health checks from the family assistance team, she underwent a health examination at a primary health facility. The bride-to-be EM from the village of Krembangan Gudo stated that she was accompanied by a family support team only once, and she only received education related to health checks.

Another data finding from Brodot village, Bandarkedungmulyo district, states that the family assistance team provides education that the upper arm circumference of women is a measure of women's nutrition. Therefore, when the upper arm circumference is less than 23 cm, the bride-to-be must increase her nutritional intake, especially by consuming more vegetables and protein. If the arm circumference is still not normal, the family assistance team advises postponing pregnancy for the time being. A prospective bride RW stated that the family support team advised

to increase the consumption of vegetables and meat, because if the upper arm circumference continues to have insufficient intake during pregnancy, the child she is carrying will be at risk of stunting. A prospective bride RW also mentioned that the cadres explained what stunting is. In addition to adding nutritious food, the bride-to-be mentioned that the cadres suggested taking iron supplement tablets, one tablet per week when not menstruating and one tablet every day during menstruation. The bride-to-be from Tampingmojo village in Tembelang district stated that after receiving education from the family assistance team regarding the increase in nutritional intake, she increased her meal portions. As a result, one week before the wedding, the evaluation by the family assistance team showed that her weight had increased by 3 kg and her upper arm circumference had also increased.

A prospective bride AN from the village of Brodot Bandarkedungmulya stated that during the third counseling session, the family support team inquired about the smoking habits of the prospective husband. The family support team advised him to reduce smoking because it can affect the development of the baby while still in the womb. In line with the prospective bride EN from Wonokerto Wonosalam, it is stated that the family support team advises to avoid being around when the husband is smoking. The prospective bride AN and EN stated that it is difficult to change their partner's smoking habits. Until the researchers conducted follow-up interviews, the prospective bride AN and EN mentioned that their partners still smoke.

Out of the 14 brides-to-be who responded, 5 were informed about ELSIMIL. The information provided was limited to the need to download the marriage and pregnancy eligibility certificate from the ELSIMIL application. A bride-to-be named UL from Brongkot village in Bandarkedungmulyo stated that she had no knowledge of ELSIMIL at all, as the family assistance team did not explain ELSIMIL or its uses during their support sessions. A prospective bride EM stated that information regarding ELSIMIL was obtained from social media. Health education aims for prospective brides and mothers to understand the importance of health behaviors in preventing stunting. With good knowledge and attitudes, prospective brides will strive to prepare for the first 1,000 days of life in preventing stunting as best as they can. The provision of multi-micronutrient supplements since the preconception period can reduce the incidence of neonatal stunting compared to the provision of iron-folate supplements only during pregnancy (Sumarmi, 2019).

The Effectiveness of Family Support Team Assistance

According to Sutrisno (2010) in Fauziah et al. (2022), the effectiveness of a program or activity is assessed based on the alignment between the objectives and the actual implementation of the program, which can be measured using 5 indicators, namely:

1. Understanding the program: the realization of the program so that it can run smoothly; understanding of the program is essential for the target audience so that the program can be successful;
2. Target accuracy: the targets aimed at must align with the rules that have been established beforehand so that the program can be implemented effectively;
3. Timeliness: a program is considered effective if it adheres to the predetermined schedule, and the more punctual a program is, the more effective it becomes; Achievement of goals: the more benefits a program provides, the more effective that program is; and
4. Real change: a program is said to be effective if it brings about real change that is directly experienced by the program's target audience

In the understanding of the program, it was found that the family assistance team members in carrying out their duties reached the target, one of which is the prospective brides. The family

assistance team is tasked with supporting prospective brides and grooms using the ELSIMIL website <https://elsimil-pwa.bkkbn.go.id> and carry out Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) on Stunting Prevention during the phase of prospective brides and grooms, ensuring that the target audience receives comprehensive information on stunting prevention (Suharno et al., 2021). This aims to ensure that every prospective bride and groom is in a state of readiness for marriage and prepared for pregnancy at the time of their wedding. It was found that out of 14 respondents, all of them have received support from the family assistance team. The support received included direct visits for the introduction and filling out of the ELSIMIL website, information on stunting prevention according to the respondents' conditions during the assistance, including obtaining referrals.

The results of the research based on target accuracy found that each respondent was a prospective bride or groom who was not married at the time of the family assistance team's support. This aligns with the target accuracy aimed at in this research, with the hope that the family support team has carried out its duties effectively before the wedding takes place. The accuracy of educational targets for prospective brides is crucial because they need to understand stunting, which is essential during the pre-marital period.

Based on the timeliness, it can be assessed from the frequency of family assistance teams supporting respondents according to the schedule set forth in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 regarding the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, which mandates that support for prospective brides must be provided three months before marriage. Within this three-month period, this study indicates that the effectiveness of assistance for prospective brides is greater with more than one session of support. This is demonstrated in the first counseling session where the brides-to-be receive advice on health condition checks. In the second counseling session, the brides-to-be receive referrals based on the needs arising from their health examination results. The third mentoring session continued, where the bride-to-be received education on stunting prevention according to health conditions, such as maintaining a proper diet for those with low Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), preventing exposure to cigarette smoke for active smokers, consuming iron supplements for those with a history of anemia, and information regarding pregnancy readiness for the bride-to-be.

The achievement of the objectives in this research is indicated by the benefits experienced by prospective brides and grooms from the pre-marriage period until they are ready to enter the pregnancy phase. The readiness for marriage and pregnancy in brides-to-be is equipped with health education. Health education aims for prospective brides or mothers to understand the importance of health behaviors in preventing stunting. With the right knowledge and attitude, prospective parents will strive to prepare the first 1,000 days of life for the prevention of stunting as best as they can. Out of 14 respondents, it was found that they felt they benefited from the support of the family assistance team received during the pre-marriage period. To help understand the first 1000 days of life in the context of preventing stunting.

The indicator of behavioral change is evident from the tangible changes, especially in first-time brides and grooms, with examination results that require health referrals. It was found that a bride-to-be with a history of anemia, who had never consumed iron supplement tablets before, became consistent in taking them after receiving support. It was also noted that there were respondents with a history of anemia who received recommendations to postpone pregnancy, so after getting married, they delayed pregnancy until they could ensure their hemoglobin levels were adequate for their physical readiness. In addition, for brides-to-be with the need to increase their Mid-Upper Arm Circumference, there is a change in behavior in managing their food intake by paying attention to nutritional content. For brides-to-be with active smoking partners, there is a behavioral change in the partners to maintain distance while smoking. The above points indicate that the brides, after receiving guidance, have made efforts to prepare themselves for

readiness for pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

The Family Assistance Team consists of midwives, family welfare empowerment representatives, and family planning cadres, who are tasked with providing information, education, and communication (IEC) to the target group regarding the importance of the First 1000 Days of Life. This approach aims to ensure that prospective brides and grooms, as the target population, gain an understanding of optimizing the First 1000 Days of Life as a crucial effort in preventing stunting. The characteristics of the Family Assistance Team's support activities may vary, making it essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the assistance provided.

Based on the research findings, it was observed that the assistance provided by the Family Assistance Team is most effective when delivered at least three months prior to marriage, and when the mentoring sessions occur more than once. The effectiveness of mentoring is closely linked to the frequency of sessions, as more frequent mentoring results in a broader range of educational content being delivered to the engaged couples.

This study aims to provide a foundational reference for future research. It is recommended that subsequent studies further examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of the support provided by Family Assistance Teams to the target group of brides-to-be. Additionally, this research is expected to serve as a basis for regional policy formulation in Jombang Regency, particularly concerning the support provided by Family Assistance Teams to all prospective brides and grooms, with a mandate for health examinations before marriage. The optimization of the Family Assistance Team's support should be implemented as an initial step towards reducing stunting, supported by binding regulations related to assistance at the district level.

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