

Improving Social Welfare: Evaluation Of Minimum Service Standards In Gorontalo Province

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Abstract

This study evaluates the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province, which aims to improve the welfare of vulnerable communities such as people with disabilities, neglected children, and the elderly. A descriptive-qualitative approach is used to analyze target achievement, service facilities, human resource (HR) capacity, and cooperation between stakeholders. The results of the study show an increase in SPM achievement from 55.46% in 2022 to 70.30% in 2023. However, service facilities and HR competencies still need improvement. Cross-sectoral collaboration helps overcome obstacles, but is not yet fully optimal. Opportunities for improvement include service digitalization, HR training, and strengthening partnerships. Strategic recommendations include increasing the budget, developing a policy roadmap, and public education campaigns. These steps are expected to encourage the achievement of more effective SPM to improve social welfare in Gorontalo.

Keywords: SPM, social welfare, evaluation, Gorontalo Province, social services.



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INTRODUCTION

Social services are a fundamental element in realizing community welfare, especially for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, abandoned children, the elderly, and socially disadvantaged. In Indonesia, social service standards are regulated through the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy as a form of the state's commitment to providing adequate basic services for all citizens. Gorontalo Province, as one of the regions with various social and economic challenges, is the focus of attention in the implementation of this policy. Evaluation of the implementation of SPM in the social sector is important to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential improvements in order to achieve policy objectives optimally. The Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy has been regulated in detail in Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, which is strengthened by Permendagri Number 59 of 2021 and Permensos Number 9 of 2018. This regulation provides guidelines for local governments in carrying out basic service obligations, including social services. At the Gorontalo Province level, this policy is further elaborated through Regional Regulation (Perda) Number 2 of 2020 concerning the Elderly and Perda Number 4 of 2023 concerning the Protection of the Rights of the Disabled. However, the implementation of this policy faces various challenges, ranging from limited infrastructure, human resources, to the available budget (Putri & Fauzi, 2021).

Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector are one of the policy instruments designed to ensure that the basic needs of the community are met, especially vulnerable groups such as children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and the poor. This policy serves as a guideline for local governments in providing equitable, standardized, and quality services in the social sector (Ratminto & Winarsih, 2013). With the SPM, it is hoped that the basic rights of the community can be fulfilled systematically and in accordance with the standards set by the central government. This is an important step in efforts to realize equitable social welfare throughout Indonesia, including Gorontalo Province (Putri et al., 2022).

a crucial issue in the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province is the lack of basic service facilities, such as social institutions for people with disabilities, abandoned children, and socially disadvantaged. The existence of orphanages as one of the mandatory infrastructures that should be provided by the local government is an urgent need. Without this facility, efforts to fulfill basic services in accordance with the standards set out in the regulations are difficult to realize. In addition, limited regional budgets also hamper the implementation of various programs designed to achieve minimum service targets. In this context, a collaboration strategy with social institutions and the National Zakat Agency (Baznas) is an alternative solution that can help cover the funding shortfall (Tahir et al., 2020). On the other hand, the SPM policy in the social sector is formulated with a very noble goal, namely to ensure that every citizen gets access to basic services fairly and evenly (Rohaeni & Marwa, 2018). This policy not only provides technical guidelines, but also serves as a measuring tool for the performance of local governments in providing public services. By setting a target of 100% achievement of basic service fulfillment, this policy requires careful planning, consistent implementation, and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. In practice, the implementation of this policy in Gorontalo Province includes various stages, starting from recording community needs, calculating service needs, program planning, to reporting in the Regional Government Implementation Report (LPPD) (Suryani & Hartono, 2020)

The scope of social services regulated in the SPM includes various aspects, both at the provincial and district/city levels. The provincial government is responsible for 14 types of services, including services for people with disabilities, the elderly, socially disadvantaged, neglected children, and social protection during and after a disaster emergency response.

Meanwhile, the district/city government is responsible for 29 types of services, most of which focus on services outside the shelter (Ulum, 2018)

In the context of Gorontalo Province, the implementation of SPM in the social sector is a challenge in itself, considering the demographic and geographical characteristics of this region. As one of the provinces that still faces various development obstacles, the local government in Gorontalo needs to face challenges such as limited resources, both in terms of budget, social service facilities, and human resource capacity. In addition, coordination and synergy between stakeholders are also often obstacles that need to be overcome. On the other hand, this condition also provides an opportunity for the government and area to innovate and develop strategies that are in accordance with local needs (Sakti & Pribadi, 2018)

SPM in the social sector includes various basic services that aim to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable groups. Some of the services regulated in this policy include the provision of social service facilities, the provision of social assistance, and the implementation of social rehabilitation programs (Akay et al., 2021). With clear standards, local governments are expected to be able to carry out these programs in a measurable manner and in accordance with the needs of the community. However, the implementation of this policy requires strong support from various parties, including the central government, community institutions, the private sector, and the community itself (Panji, 2023)

Limited resources are often the main obstacle in the implementation of SPM in the social sector. Many regions, including Gorontalo, still experience budget constraints that have an impact on the provision of adequate facilities and programs. Social service facilities such as social shelters, shelters, and rehabilitation centers are often insufficient to accommodate the increasing number of beneficiaries. In addition, the quality of the available facilities often does not meet the expected standards, so that the services provided are less than optimal. This obstacle requires innovative strategies to overcome these limitations, such as utilizing digital technology or strengthening partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (Lopez & Anderson, 2020).

Human resource capacity is also an important factor influencing the implementation of SPM in the social sector. Workers assigned to the social sector, both at the provincial and district/city levels, must have adequate competence to carry out their duties according to the established standards. However, in reality, there are still many personnel who have not received adequate training. Lack of understanding of service standards and high workloads often hinder the effectiveness of program implementation. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve the quality of human resources through training, education, and continuous capacity development (Z. Abdussamad & Amala, 2016)

Coordination between stakeholders is also a key element in the implementation of SPM in the social sector. Collaboration between local governments, community institutions, and non-governmental organizations can help overcome resource limitations and expand the reach of services. In Gorontalo Province, several forms of partnerships have been developed to support the implementation of social programs. For example, cooperation with Baznas in providing social assistance to vulnerable groups is one example of an effective strategy. However, this cooperation is often not well organized, so that the results achieved are not optimal. Better regulation and coordination are needed to ensure that all parties can contribute effectively in supporting the SPM policy (Z. Abdussamad, 2021)

On the other hand, digital technology offers great opportunities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of SPM implementation in the social sector. An integrated information system can help local governments identify community needs, monitor program implementation, and evaluate achievements more accurately. Digitalization can also accelerate the process of data collection and resource allocation, so that services can be provided more quickly and on target. In this era of digital transformation, the use of technology is one of the



strategic steps that needs to be prioritized in the implementation of social policies(Pakarain & Abdussamad, 2022).

To achieve SPM goals in the social sector, a strong commitment is needed from all parties, both the government and the community. Local governments must have mature planning based on local needs, so that the programs implemented can have a real impact on the community. In addition, active community participation in supporting program implementation is also an important factor. Through appropriate education and campaigns, the community can better understand their rights and contribute to supporting the policies that have been designed.

Evaluation of the implementation of SPM in the social sector is also an important step to identify existing strengths and weaknesses. By conducting periodic evaluations, local governments can find out to what extent the programs implemented have achieved the set targets. The results of this evaluation can be used as a basis for formulating better and more effective policies in the future. In addition, evaluations can also help improve accountability and transparency in the implementation of social policies (J. Abdussamad et al., 2022).

The implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province is a reflection of the local government's efforts to meet the basic needs of the community. Despite facing various challenges, there is a great opportunity to improve the implementation of this policy through innovative and collaborative strategies. By utilizing digital technology, increasing human resource capacity, and strengthening coordination between stakeholders, it is hoped that the implementation of SPM can run more effectively and provide real benefits to the community. Joint commitment from all parties will be the key to success in realizing equitable and quality social services in Gorontalo Province.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative approach (Suharto & Hamid, 2022) to evaluate the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy in the social sector in Gorontalo Province. The research location is focused on the provincial and district/city social services responsible for implementing this policy. Data sources consist of primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with social service officials, social care managers, and beneficiaries, as well as secondary data from policy documents, SPM implementation reports, and relevant literature. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation of social service facilities, and documentation studies. Data analysis is carried out descriptively-qualitatively through three stages: data reduction, presentation of data in narrative form, and drawing conclusions. Data validity is guaranteed through triangulation of sources, methods, and data, by confirming the results of the analysis with informants to ensure accuracy. This approach is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the SPM policy, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in Gorontalo Province.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province is one of the strategic efforts to ensure that the community, especially vulnerable groups, receive quality basic services. Although it has recorded a number of positive achievements, the implementation of this policy still faces various challenges that require serious attention. Based on the results of the study, there are several main aspects that affect the effectiveness of the implementation of SPM. The achievement of SPM targets, for example, has shown an increasing trend in recent years, but has not yet reached the ideal standards set. This is inseparable from budget limitations, which often become an obstacle in the implementation of social programs. In addition, the availability of social service facilities, such as social institutions and shelters, is still far from adequate to meet the needs of the community. This condition is further exacerbated by the capacity of human resources that is not yet optimal,



both in terms of number and competence. Many social service officers have not received adequate training, so they do not fully understand the service standards that must be applied. On the other hand, the effectiveness of cooperation between stakeholders, including local governments, social institutions, and community organizations, is also a challenge in itself. Although this cooperation has helped alleviate some obstacles, less than optimal coordination often hinders the implementation of policies as a whole. Therefore, the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province requires a more focused and comprehensive approach. By strengthening coordination, increasing human resource capacity, and maximizing the potential for collaboration with various parties, the implementation of SPM can be more effective in providing real impacts for the community. These challenges also open up opportunities to develop policy innovations that are more responsive to the needs of local communities.

1. Achievement of SPM Targets

The achievement of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province has shown quite significant development in the last two years. Based on the data collected, the achievement of SPM increased from 55.46% in 2022 to 70.30% in 2023. This figure reflects an increase in the commitment and efforts of the local government in meeting the established basic service standards, especially in providing access to services to vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, neglected children, the elderly, and the socially disadvantaged. Programs such as providing assistance with disability aids, distributing basic necessities for the elderly, and providing temporary housing for neglected children are concrete manifestations of the implementation of this policy.

This achievement is still far from the ideal target set, namely 100% fulfillment of basic services. The gap between the achievement and the ideal target is still an indicator that the challenges in implementing SPM are still significant. One of the main obstacles faced is budget constraints. Limited funding has resulted in several planned programs not being able to be implemented optimally. These limitations not only affect the quantity of services provided, but also affect the quality of services, where several social facilities, such as social institutions and shelters, still do not meet adequate standards. This is a major challenge for the local government, considering that the need for social services in Gorontalo Province continues to increase along with the growth in the number of vulnerable groups. The increase in SPM achievement has not been fully distributed across all districts and cities in Gorontalo Province. Some regions show better achievements than others, depending on the capacity of human resources, infrastructure, and local policy priorities. This inequality indicates the need to strengthen the role of coordination between the provincial and district/city governments in developing a more integrated implementation strategy. Efforts to identify areas with low achievement and allocate additional resources to these areas are crucial steps so that social services can be felt evenly by the entire community. This increase in achievement is also inseparable from the active participation of various parties, including social institutions, community organizations, and the private sector. Collaboration with external parties, such as Baznas and religious organizations, helps cover budget shortfalls in several social programs. However, although this participation provides significant contributions, the sustainability of these programs remains a challenge, especially when dependence on external parties is too great. Therefore, more innovative and sustainable policies are needed to maximize the potential of local resources in supporting the implementation of MSS. To achieve the ideal target of 100%, local governments need to develop a more strategic and comprehensive approach. This includes increasing budget allocation, optimizing human resources, and strengthening synergies between stakeholders. In addition, periodic monitoring and evaluation of program implementation is also important to ensure that the policies implemented remain relevant and

effective. Thus, increasing MSS achievements in the future can be more focused, have a wider impact, and support improving the welfare of the people in Gorontalo Province in a sustainable manner.

2. Availability of Social Service Facilities

The availability of social service facilities in Gorontalo Province is still one of the main obstacles in implementing the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy. Based on observations, facilities such as social institutions, shelters, and other social service centers are still inadequate to meet the needs of the community, especially vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, abandoned children, and the elderly. Several existing social institutions operate with limited capacity, both in terms of capacity and the quality of the facilities available. For example, special facilities for people with disabilities, such as room accessibility, mobility aids, and skills training facilities, are very minimal. This condition results in services provided to people with disabilities often being suboptimal and far from the standards stipulated in the SPM policy.

Shelters for vulnerable groups also face limitations in terms of equipment, manpower, and operational funds. Some shelters even have difficulty providing basic needs, such as adequate food and health care. This not only affects the quality of life of beneficiaries, but also hinders the achievement of the social service targets that have been set. Another challenge is the lack of equal distribution of facilities across districts and cities in Gorontalo Province. Certain areas have better facilities, while other areas experience significant deficiencies, making it difficult for people in remote areas to access adequate services.

3. Human Resources (HR) Capacity

Human resources (HR) assigned to the social sector play a crucial role in the success of the implementation of SPM. Based on data, the number of personnel in the social sector in Gorontalo Province includes 33 people assigned to social institutions and 2,701 people in the social protection sector. Although this number is quite significant, the quality of HR remains a major challenge. Most personnel have not received adequate special training to understand and implement service standards according to SPM policies. The lack of technical training, such as handling people with disabilities, child protection management, and community-based service management, means that most services cannot be carried out professionally and efficiently.

High workload is also a factor that affects HR effectiveness. With limited manpower compared to the number of beneficiaries, many personnel have to handle tasks beyond their capacity. As a result, the quality of services is less than optimal, and some basic service standards cannot be met. In addition, the level of welfare of workers in the social sector is still low, thus affecting their motivation and performance in providing the best services.

Another problem identified is the lack of specialization in certain tasks. Most personnel carry out multifunctional roles without having special expertise in certain fields, such as counseling, rehabilitation, or social advocacy. To overcome this problem, systematic efforts are needed to improve HR competency through continuous training, professional certification, and increased incentives. The government also needs to pay attention to the aspect of HR distribution so that all regions, especially remote areas, have adequate personnel in terms of number and quality.'

Limited social service facilities and suboptimal HR capacity are interrelated challenges in the implementation of SPM policies in the social sector in Gorontalo Province. To improve service effectiveness, local governments need to invest more in developing social infrastructure and improving HR competency. Steps such as building new facilities, rehabilitating existing facilities, and organizing intensive training for social workers can be long-term solutions. With adequate support, the implementation of SPM in the social sector is expected to be able to meet



the needs of the community better and more evenly.

4. Effectiveness of Inter-Stakeholder Cooperation

Inter-stakeholder cooperation is an important element in the implementation of SPM policies in the social sector. Based on the results of interviews, collaboration between local governments, social institutions, and community organizations has shown positive results in overcoming budget and resource limitations. For example, cooperation with the National Zakat Agency (Baznas) has helped provide social assistance for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, orphans, and the elderly. In addition, several community organizations have also actively contributed in the form of skills training, mentoring, and fundraising to support social programs.

However, the effectiveness of this cooperation has not been fully optimal. Several informants stated that coordination between institutions is often poorly organized, resulting in overlapping programs or a lack of alignment with policy objectives. In addition, the absence of a clear regulatory mechanism in the division of roles and responsibilities between parties often becomes an obstacle in the implementation of joint programs. For example, in several cases, the assistance distributed through this cooperation is uneven or not on target, so that the benefits are not felt optimally by the community in need.

To improve the effectiveness of cooperation, it is necessary to strengthen coordination through the establishment of a communication forum between stakeholders. This forum can function as a forum for planning, monitoring, and evaluating programs that are implemented together. In addition, it is also important to prepare guidelines or cooperation guides that can be used as a reference in implementing the program. With better arrangements, collaboration between parties is expected to run more efficiently and provide a more significant impact in supporting the achievement of SPM targets in the social sector.

5. Opportunities for Improvement

Although the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province still faces various challenges, there are a number of significant opportunities that can be utilized to improve the condition. One of the main opportunities is the application of digital technology as a supporting tool in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of social services. By developing an integrated information system, the process of recording community needs can be carried out more quickly, accurately, and systematically. This technology also allows the government to monitor resource allocation in real time, so that the delivery of services to vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, neglected children, and the elderly, can be carried out more precisely.

Strengthening the capacity of human resources (HR) through training and competency development is another opportunity that needs to be optimized. The government can organize ongoing training programs to equip social service officers with technical and managerial skills that are in accordance with the needs in the field. This capacity building will help ensure that each personnel understands the service standards that must be applied and is able to carry them out professionally. In the long term, this effort will not only improve the quality of services but also build public trust in the government.

Another opportunity is the development of strategic partnerships with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Collaboration with these parties can help overcome budget and resource constraints that are often major obstacles in implementing social programs. For example, the private sector can contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, while non-governmental organizations can support through mentoring and fundraising. With a targeted collaborative approach, various parties can work together to support the successful implementation of SPM in Gorontalo Province.

6. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the research results, a number of strategic recommendations can be proposed to optimize the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province. First, the local government needs to increase the budget allocation for social programs by strengthening needs-based financial planning. An adequate budget will ensure that priority programs can be implemented optimally, including the provision of adequate social service facilities. Second, it is important for the government to prepare a comprehensive and targeted roadmap for the implementation of SPM. This roadmap must involve all stakeholders, including the community, to ensure that each stage of implementation has a clear focus and its success can be measured. Third, the monitoring and evaluation system must be strengthened so that the government can identify obstacles and opportunities early on. With an integrated evaluation mechanism, the implementation of social programs can continue to be adjusted to conditions in the field, so that policy objectives can be achieved. Fourth, the government also needs to increase public awareness of the importance of social programs through campaigns and public education. With a better understanding, the community can actively participate in supporting the implementation of SPM, both as beneficiaries and as partners in the implementation process.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province has shown some progress, but still requires improvement in various aspects. By utilizing digital technology, increasing human resource capacity, and expanding strategic partnerships, the government can overcome various existing challenges. The implementation of the strategic recommendations that have been identified, if carried out consistently and sustainably, is believed to be able to encourage the achievement of minimum service targets. Commitment from all parties involved, including the government, community, and private sector, is needed to ensure that the main objective of SPM, namely improving community welfare, especially vulnerable groups, can be achieved effectively.

The implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province has shown some progress, especially in increasing target achievement from the previous year. However, there are still various challenges that require attention, such as limited social service facilities, low human resource capacity, and less than optimal cooperation between stakeholders. These challenges have an impact on the failure to meet service standards optimally in accordance with established policies.

Opportunities for improvement remain wide open through the use of digital technology, strengthening human resource capacity, and developing strategic partnerships with various parties. Digital technology can be a solution to improve service efficiency, while continuous training for human resources can encourage improvements in service quality. Partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations are also important alternatives to support the financing and implementation of social programs. Therefore, a strong commitment is needed from all parties, including the government, community, and private sector, to jointly overcome existing obstacles and take advantage of available opportunities. With a planned strategy, effective management, and active involvement of all stakeholders, the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province can continue to be improved. Finally, this effort is expected to be able to provide a real impact on improving the welfare of the community, especially vulnerable groups, as well as being a step forward in realizing more inclusive and equitable public services.

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