

# Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Basic Food Assistance (*Sembako*) Program in Improving the Welfare of the Underprivileged Community

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program by the Cirebon Regency Social Service in improving the welfare of the underprivileged community. The focus of the study is directed at five indicators of effectiveness based on Campbell J.P.'s theory (1970), namely program success, target success, satisfaction with the program, input-output levels, and achievement of overall goals. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach through research activities. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, document studies, and interviews. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program still faces several problems, such as inaccurate recipient targets, inaccurate poverty data, low understanding of beneficiary, limited implementing resources, and minimal long-term impact evaluation. To improve the effectiveness of the program, improvement strategies are needed including data updates, strengthening the capacity of implementers, digitizing the system and increasing social literacy.

**Keywords:** Basic Food Assistance, Community Welfare, Program Effectiveness, Strategy, Society

## 1 Introduction

As a developing country, poverty alleviation efforts continue to be a priority in national and regional development planning in Indonesia. The government, through various ministries and agencies, has launched a range of social protection programs, including the Basic Food Assistance Program, which is a continuation of the Non-Cash Food Assistance Program (BPNT). This program aims to improve food security, alleviate the burden of expenses, and strengthen the socio-economic conditions of disadvantaged communities. At the regional level, the Social Affairs Office plays a strategic role in the implementation of the Food Assistance Program. The Social Affairs Office of Cirebon Regency, as part of the regional apparatus, is responsible for managing recipient data, coordinating with village and sub-district governments, and ensuring that assistance is distributed on time and to the right targets. Therefore, a robust system is required in terms of administration, data verification, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of assistance on beneficiaries [1].

Poverty is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon, not only related to economic issues but also linked to social, cultural, and political issues. Understanding the economic dimension means that poverty is defined as a limitation of economic resources to maintain a decent standard of living, which in sociological terms is referred to as absolute poverty. The phenomenon of economic poverty is generally associated with insufficient income to meet a decent standard of living and depends on what happens to income distribution and consumption [4].

Poverty in this study refers to poverty among the people of Cirebon Regency, where people often live in areas with low standards of living, depending on livelihoods such as agriculture, construction work, food sales, and other activities. This poverty has led to an increase in poverty rates among communities that were previously not classified as poor—those who were only slightly above the poverty line—but have now become poor due to reduced income and increased expenses [5].

This food assistance program is aimed at improving the welfare of underprivileged communities that still face various challenges on the ground. These challenges include inaccuracies in beneficiary data, leading to assistance not reaching those who truly need it, inefficient distribution processes, and assistance quality and quantity that do not

always meet acceptable standards. Additionally, low community participation in monitoring processes and weak evaluations by implementing parties have prevented the program from fully achieving its intended social welfare objectives [6].

The basic food assistance program should be implemented based on accurate and regularly updated data to ensure that it reaches the right targets. The distribution process needs to be designed to be fast, fair, and equitable, and accompanied by guarantees of the quality and quantity of basic food items. Active community participation in monitoring is also important to improve the transparency and accountability of program implementation. In addition, periodic evaluations by relevant agencies need to be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program and identify areas for improvement. With implementation in accordance with these principles, the food assistance program is expected to have a real positive impact on improving the welfare of the underprivileged in a sustainable manner.

Based on the previous discussion, which shows that poverty has a significant effect on community welfare, the researcher aims to investigate community issues related to the impact of poverty on the welfare of the people of Cirebon Regency. The researcher has titled the study "The Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program in Improving the Welfare of the Underprivileged.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Effectivity**

Effectiveness is the ability to choose goals by utilizing the right tools and infrastructure to achieve goals accurately and quickly, with successful or unsuccessful outcomes. According to Campbell J.P. in the book "Bureaucratic Management and Policy" [7], the general and most prominent measures of effectiveness are program success, target achievement, program satisfaction, input and output levels, and overall goal attainment. Program effectiveness can be implemented through operational capabilities in executing work programs that align with previously established objectives [8].

Effectiveness management of organizational resources achieves organizational goals. Organizational resources consist of human resources, facilities and infrastructure, organization, governance or work mechanisms, institutional or organizational functions, and finance or budget. Effective resource management is thus the success of managing organizational resources to achieve organizational goals [9].

Effectiveness in this study is closely related to the program being researched, as the researcher aims to assess the extent of the program's implementation effectiveness. Measuring effectiveness will be conducted meticulously because the program's objectives, which target the community, are broad and abstract. Data analysis is conducted based on Campbell J.P.'s (1970) effectiveness theory, which includes five indicators:

- a. Program success: This indicator refers to the extent to which the designed program has been implemented according to plan and is running well. The main focus is on the operational performance and technical implementation of the program. If a program can be run without major obstacles, according to plan, then it is considered successful.
- b. Target success: Target success assesses the extent to which the specific and measurable objectives of a program or organization can be achieved. This differs from program success in that it places greater emphasis on the desired end result, rather than just the implementation process.
- c. Satisfaction with the program: This indicator looks at things from the perspective of stakeholders, including program participants, management, the community, and other involved parties. The effectiveness of a program is also assessed based on their level of satisfaction with the program's process and results.
- d. Satisfaction with the program: This indicator looks at things from the perspective of stakeholders, including program participants, management, the community, and other involved parties. The effectiveness of a program is also assessed based on their level of satisfaction with the program's process and results.
- e. Overall goal achievement: This indicator assesses the extent to which a program or organization achieves its overall long-term strategic goals, not just small or short-term goals. It reflects the overall contribution of the program to the broader vision of the organization or institution concerned.

### **2.2 Basic Food Assistance Program**

In general, the term "policy" is used to refer to the behavior of a leader. According to Anderson, policy is the direction of action that has a purpose set by someone in overcoming a problem or issue [4].

Chandler and Piano in [4] state that "public policy is the strategic use of existing resources and assets to solve public or government problems." Such policies have greatly assisted government bureaucrats and politicians in solving

public problems. Robert Eyestone states that, broadly speaking, public policy can be defined as the relationship between a government unit and its environment.

The Basic Food Assistance Program is a food social assistance program developed from non-cash food assistance, with increased assistance value and types of food items. The Basic Food Assistance Program is distributed through Social Welfare Cadres (KKS) equipped with electronic money and/or savings features, serving as a medium for social assistance distribution.

According to the Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4 of 2023 on the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program, the Basic Food Assistance Program is a food social assistance program provided in cash or non-cash form to beneficiary families registered in the integrated social welfare database [10].

## 2.3 Community Welfare

Fahrudin states that: "Well-being is a condition in which a person can fulfill their basic needs, whether it be food, clothing, shelter, clean drinking water, as well as the opportunity to continue their education and have adequate employment that can support their quality of life so that they are free from poverty, ignorance, fear, or worry, and can live a safe and peaceful life, both physically and spiritually." The welfare of the lower-middle class can be presented in terms of the standard of living of the community, which is characterized by freedom from poverty, better health, higher levels of education, and higher levels of productivity.

The Central Statistics Agency (2010) defines the poor as those with an average per capita monthly expenditure below the poverty line. The poverty line is based on income, taking into account dimensions of well-being. However, this measure does not accurately reflect the actual poverty threshold. Regional differences are also a characteristic of poverty, as evidenced by disparities between rural and urban areas [4].

## 2.4 Previous Research

The first research, titled "The Effectiveness of Government Social Assistance for Communities Affected by Covid-19 in Gendongarum Village, Kanor District, Bojonegoro Regency," revealed that this study was conducted due to the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred throughout the country, including Indonesia. This caused a significant impact on various sectors, including the economy. This prompted the government to take various measures to alleviate the burden on the community, namely by providing social assistance. The urgency of this study lies in assessing the effectiveness of social assistance programs during the COVID-19 pandemic to serve as an evaluation tool for providing assistance to affected communities. The objective of this study is to gain knowledge about the distribution of COVID-19 assistance funds and to analyze the effectiveness of assistance implementation in Gedongarum Village. This research is qualitative in nature. In conducting the research, the author obtained information through observations of the assistance distribution process, interviews with Gedongarum village residents, including village officials, assistance distributors, assistance recipients, non-recipients, and documentation. The results of this research indicate that the implementation of social assistance in Gedongarum Village has not been effective [11].

Second, research entitled "The Effectiveness of the Basic Food Program in Poverty Alleviation in Medan Belawan District" shows that poverty in Indonesia continues to increase, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. This has become a problem that needs to be addressed by the Indonesian government, one of which is through the Basic Food Program social assistance. Social assistance programs are programs in which local governments provide financial assistance to communities that are not sustainable. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the Basic Food Assistance Program in alleviating poverty in Medan Belawan District. The research method used is a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection techniques used primary and secondary data through in-depth interviews and document studies, followed by document analysis. Sample selection used purposive sampling, resulting in several informants, including: the Social Affairs Office of Medan City, the Regional Coordinator of the Basic Food Assistance Program, the District Social Worker, E-Warong, the Chairman of the Environmental Group, and the Beneficiary Family. The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program is still ineffective based on the indicators used, namely the resource approach, process approach, and goal approach. Although the Basic Food Assistance Program provides convenience for Beneficiary Families, there are still many areas that need improvement to make it more optimal and effective [12].

Third, a study titled "The Effectiveness of the Non-Cash Food Assistance Program (BPNT) in the Awayan District of Balangan Regency (Case Study of Ambakiang Village and Piyait Village)" shows that the BPNT program is intended for underprivileged communities, considering that many people in our society still live below the poverty

line. The research results indicate that the program is not yet effective, as seen from the following variables: First, the program objectives and planning indicators are quite effective. Second, the success of the program targets, as measured by the accuracy of the targets, is not yet effective, while the SOP indicators are good. Third, the program satisfaction variable consists of indicators related to program implementation activities (staff) and satisfaction with implementation, which are good. Fourth, the variable of overall goal achievement consists of indicators of activity strategy, which are good, and organizational assessment, which is good. Organizational assessment is good. Monitoring has been carried out based on the evaluation conducted. The factors hindering the program include: the names of BPNT recipients still use old data and have not been updated. Additionally, there is a lack of education regarding the proper and correct management of assistance in Ambakiang Village and Piyait Village. Efforts to address this include: Re-registering BPNT recipients and conducting guidance or education on the actual purpose of BPNT for the community, which is sometimes done every three months [13].

### **3 Research Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program at the Social Services Agency of Cirebon Regency. This method was chosen because it is able to describe in depth the process, challenges, and dynamics of program implementation based on literature studies and observations. Data was collected through observation activities reinforced by literature review. Data collection techniques included observation, literature review, and interviews. Data collection techniques were combined, while data analysis was conducted qualitatively with a primary focus on the meaning contained in the research findings [14].

The data sources used in this study include primary data from direct interviews with key informants involved in the Social Affairs Department, such as staff from the Poverty Alleviation Division (PFM) of the Cirebon Regency Social Affairs Department, as well as representatives from the Social Welfare Center (Puskesos) and the general public who received assistance. Secondary data on methodology and theory were collected through literature reviews. To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation techniques by comparing information obtained from various parties. Data triangulation is a research technique to enhance data validity and reliability by combining data from various sources, methods, or theories. The aim is to gain a more comprehensive understanding and reduce bias in the research.

The triangulation process was carried out by observing consistent responses from the Social Affairs Department's Poverty Handling Division staff, the Social Welfare Center, and the general public in Cirebon Regency who received assistance in the form of the Basic Food Assistance Program, so that the accuracy of the data could be determined precisely.

### **4 Results and Discussion**

The management of the Basic Food Assistance Program for underprivileged communities is carried out entirely by the Cirebon Regency Social Services Agency. The role of the Social Services Agency as the authority is to establish basic guidelines for the standardization of the Basic Food Assistance Program. Based on the research findings obtained through interviews and observations, the researcher will describe the results of the analysis. During the data collection process, interviews were conducted with various relevant parties, including staff from the Poverty Alleviation Division, the Social Affairs Department of Cirebon Regency, the Social Welfare Center, and the general public who received assistance in Cirebon Regency. Through this approach, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Basic Food Assistance Program for the underprivileged and identify the factors influencing its success as well as the challenges faced in efforts to improve the quality of services at the Cirebon District Social Services Agency. The following is an analysis of the issues at the Cirebon District Social Services Agency using Campbell's Effectiveness Theory with five indicators:

#### **4.1 The Success of the Program**

The success of the program can be measured by the extent to which the Basic Food Assistance program achieves its goal of distributing aid accurately to beneficiary families (KPM). In the case of the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance program, the Social Services Agency acknowledges that there are still some errors in the program, such as inclusion errors (ineligible recipients still receiving aid) and exclusion errors (eligible recipients not registered and not receiving aid). The Social Affairs Department is continuously improving the database (data on program recipients) to prevent such issues from occurring in the future.

The second issue concerns data accuracy, where the Social Affairs Department has identified numerous cases where beneficiary data does not reflect current conditions on the ground. This is invalid because data errors result in assistance distribution that does not align with actual conditions, indicating that the program's short-term objectives have not been optimally achieved. As a result, beneficiaries will be re-evaluated and monitored, and those who are ineligible to receive assistance will have their names removed from the database.

The third issue is that most beneficiary families (KPM) still have a low level of understanding of the Basic Food Assistance Program, which is not in line with the program's success because it shows that the program has not been fully successful in achieving a real impact on the welfare of KPM. Village officials, department heads, Puskesmas, and village chiefs continue to coordinate to ensure that the impact is felt [15].

The fourth issue is that the program's human resources, in terms of the number of personnel at the village or sub-district level, are still very limited. When village/sub-district officials have multiple functions and inadequate facilities, the program cannot be implemented effectively. The limited ability to use applications such as SIKS-NG causes the data collection and distribution of assistance to be slow and prone to errors. This reduces the overall success rate of the program. The Social Affairs Department stated that the human resources required are not proportional to the number of villages, which total 424, so the Social Affairs Department continues to seek and train new members [15].

The fifth and final issue is that there is no evaluation system capable of assessing real changes in the quality of life of beneficiaries. When evaluations are only administrative in nature, the indicators of success become superficial and do not reflect substantial changes. Without measuring quality of life, such as food security or family welfare, the program can be considered successful procedurally, but functionally unsuccessful. Village officials and the Social Affairs Office conduct outreach regarding changes in the quality of life of the community to ensure long-term positive impacts.

The first indicator of program success is deemed ineffective and suboptimal, as seen in the paragraphs above, before implementation, during implementation, and after implementation. Solutions that can be implemented by the Cirebon Regency Social Affairs Office include developing a digital system based on an application that the community can use to check their participation status and submit objections if they feel eligible for assistance but are not registered, providing education to program implementation staff to address the shortage of human resources, and conducting outreach to the general public regarding the Basic Food Assistance (*Sembako*) program.

## 4.2 Target Achievement

In the context of implementing the Basic Food Assistance Program at the Social Services Agency of Cirebon Regency, this aspect remains a serious challenge that requires attention and systematic improvement. The Basic Food Assistance Program is fundamentally intended for Beneficiary Families (KPM) registered in the Integrated Social Welfare Database (DTKS), a database managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and periodically updated by local governments. However, in its implementation on the ground, many cases are still found where social assistance is provided to individuals or families who are not eligible to receive it (inclusion error), while some residents who should be eligible are not registered and do not receive assistance (exclusion error). The Social Affairs Office and the Social Welfare Center agree to coordinate to verify these data errors [16].

This indicator measures the extent to which the target group actually benefits from the program. The inaccuracy of DTKS data, which causes assistance to be misdirected, shows that the target has not been achieved. The fact that there are still residents who should receive assistance but are not registered shows that the distribution and validation system for recipients is not yet effective [17].

In addition, many cases were found where beneficiary data did not reflect the current conditions on the ground. Some residents who had died, moved, or experienced changes in their socioeconomic status were still listed as beneficiaries [15]. DTKS data containing beneficiaries who had died, moved, or were no longer classified as poor indicated that the program's targets were inaccurate. On the other hand, residents affected by disasters or who have lost their jobs are not recorded. This indicates a failure to reach the groups that truly need assistance, so the success indicators for the target have not been met.

The second indicator is ineffective for addressing issues related to the implementation of the food assistance program and cases where food assistance recipients do not align with on-the-ground conditions. The solution to both issues is the integration of data systems across agencies (Social Affairs Department, Population and Civil Registration Department, Regional Planning, Research, and Development Agency, and Central Statistics Agency) to prevent data overlap, process beneficiary validation, and assist technicians in data collection.

### 4.3 Satisfaction with the Program

The evaluation of the Basic Food Assistance (*Sembako*) Program should not be limited to measuring the administrative distribution of aid, but should also involve a comprehensive analysis of the social and economic impacts of the program. A good evaluation allows local governments to see whether the program has brought about significant changes to the welfare of beneficiary families (KPM) and how to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program's positive impacts.

The Social Affairs Department collaborates with the Social Welfare Center to continuously evaluate and monitor the program together. Public satisfaction does not only depend on receiving assistance but also on how the assistance helps them in the long term. When improvements are not felt or documented, public trust and satisfaction in the program will decline, especially if they feel they are merely objects rather than subjects of the program.

The third indicator of program satisfaction is less effective because it requires a comprehensive analysis of post-receipt impacts. The solution is to enhance socialization and social literacy activities through Puskesmas and Social Welfare Cadres (KKS) in villages, using a direct approach to households (door-to-door) and through local media, as well as creating simple educational books or videos about the rights and obligations of KPM, and the proper mechanisms for using assistance.

### 4.4 Input-Output Level

Social welfare officers, social workers, and village data operators often perform multiple functions simultaneously, resulting in suboptimal program implementation. The facilities and infrastructure used in program implementation are still uneven and do not always meet needs. The use of information technology in program operations is still very limited. Although the central government has developed various applications such as SIKS-NG (Social Welfare Information System - Next Generation), not all regions are able to utilize them optimally due to limitations in infrastructure and digital skills of human resources (HR) at the local level. However, the use of digital technology is crucial to accelerate data collection, validation, distribution, and reporting of assistance.

Slow service, uneven distribution, and unclear reporting systems due to technological and infrastructure limitations will reduce beneficiary satisfaction. When the public perceives the system as non-transparent or difficult to access, they become apathetic or even disappointed with the program. This can weaken the program's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Issues related to human resources handling multiple tasks are deemed ineffective. The solution is to recruit young people, conduct regular training, and provide performance-based incentives for field staff, including young people, Social Welfare Workers (Puskesmas), and Social Workers.

### 4.5 Achieving Overall Goals

The first problem is the lack of accuracy in targeting beneficiaries. The main objective of the Basic Food Assistance Program is to improve the welfare of the underprivileged by fulfilling their basic needs. However, with the continuing inequality in the distribution of aid, the overall objective has not been optimally achieved. Problems in data validation and low local participation show that the program has not been able to achieve a strategic impact that is equitable and socially just. On the other hand, some communities feel that they have benefited from this program, such as having their basic food needs met [18]

The second problem is that the lack of accurate poverty data is not in line with this indicator. The overall objective of the Basic Food Assistance Program is to improve the welfare of the poor in a fair and equitable manner. Inaccurate data, which leads to misdirected assistance and budget waste, hinders the achievement of this objective. In addition, declining public trust in government programs also weakens the long-term effects of this program.

The third issue is the low level of understanding among beneficiaries. The overall objective of the Basic Food Assistance Program is to improve food security and the welfare of the poor. However, if the assistance is used for irrelevant purposes, community participation is passive, and data is not updated accurately, the program's broader objectives will not be achieved. Lack of understanding causes the program to become merely a routine distribution of assistance without bringing about significant socio-economic change [17]

The fourth problem is the inability to optimally utilize human resources due to limitations in infrastructure and digital skills at the local level. When digital infrastructure is not used optimally, data is not up to date, and human resources are overwhelmed, the long-term goal of improving social welfare will not be achieved. The inefficiency of the system can actually increase the risk of social inequality and budget waste [19]

The fifth issue is that impact evaluation remains a fundamental weakness in the implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program. Without a systematic impact evaluation tool, there is no strong evidence that the objectives have been achieved. This hinders the process of continuous improvement and increases the likelihood that the program will only run as an administrative routine, rather than as a tool for social transformation.

These five issues are certainly not effective in the final indicator related to the achievement of comprehensive goals, because in reality, not all goals are fully achieved. The proposed solution is to conduct periodic evaluations based on welfare indicators such as household expenditure, food security, and access to basic services. These evaluations can be conducted every 6–12 months to determine whether the results have changed significantly or not. Collaboration with academics and research institutions is needed to test the effectiveness of the solutions to be implemented.

## 5 Conclusion

The implementation of the Basic Food Assistance Program by the Social Services Agency of Cirebon Regency is a strategic step toward improving the welfare of underprivileged communities. However, research and practice show that the effectiveness of this program still faces a number of significant obstacles. Based on Campbell J.P.'s (1970) theory of effectiveness, there are five key aspects that require attention: program success, target success, program satisfaction, input and output levels, and overall goal achievement. First, target accuracy remains a major issue, marked by inaccuracies in beneficiary identification due to the lack of accuracy in the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS). Second, inaccuracies in poverty data result in assistance not reaching the intended beneficiaries. Third, beneficiaries' understanding of the program remains low, affecting the utilization of assistance in a manner inconsistent with its intended purpose. Fourth, resource utilization is not yet optimal due to insufficient capacity in terms of both personnel and supporting facilities. Fifth, there is a lack of long-term monitoring systems for the welfare of beneficiaries.

Overall, the implementation of the food assistance program by the Cirebon Regency Social Affairs Office still needs improvement in several aspects, particularly in terms of targeting accuracy, distribution effectiveness, community participation, and impact evaluation systems. By strengthening inter-institutional coordination, updating data regularly, enhancing the capacity of implementers, and adopting a participatory and data-driven approach, this program has the potential to be more effective in sustainably improving the welfare of disadvantaged communities.

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