



Collaborative Communication for Inclusive Nutrition Access: A Case Study of Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze collaborative communication in the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was used in this research. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, while data analysis utilized an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results indicate that the Bandung Regency Government acts as the primary coordinator through governance strengthening, task force formation, and dashboard-based monitoring, while the media plays a role in disseminating information and ensuring transparency, and the community participates in monitoring and providing feedback. The findings indicate that the synergy among these three actors forms a triple-helix collaborative communication model that enhances the effectiveness of the sustainable implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, Indonesia. The contribution of this research is to propose a collaborative governance-based communication model that integrates the government, media, and the public through digital monitoring and local supply chains to improve communication networks in the implementation of a sustainable MBG program.

Keywords: Collaborative Communication, Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG), Triple Helix, Government, Media, Community, Bandung Regency.

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Introduction

Efforts to develop high-quality human resources are crucial for achieving the “Golden Indonesia” vision by 2045. However, significant obstacles remain, particularly those related to malnutrition, such as stunting in children, which must be a top priority (Rahman et al., 2023). Stunting can be identified by a child’s abnormal height and developmental delays, both cognitive and motor, including delayed speech and walking, as well as a weakened immune system that makes the child more susceptible to illness. This poses a long-term problem for the future, linked to reduced learning ability, diminished economic productivity, and the potential for increased disease (Black et al., 2013; Bhutta et al., 2013). Therefore, providing adequate nutrition to children is one of the ways to address stunting. In this context, the involvement of key stakeholders is essential to address stunting. Specifically, the collaborative communication efforts of the Free Nutritious Food Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency, the focus of this study require the participation of the following actors: First, local government agencies, which serve as program coordinators and policymakers, play a crucial role. Second, the media serves as a channel for disseminating information and as a mechanism for social control in program implementation. Third, the community acts as beneficiaries and participatory partners in monitoring and providing feedback on the implementation of the MBG program. These three actors collaborate through cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, including coordination, information dissemination, policy-making, and public response or feedback. The concept of collaborative governance emphasizes stakeholder involvement in assessing the success of a policy, particularly through multisectoral communication, collective and collegial leadership, and resource strengthening (Dewi, 2019).

In the implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, communication takes place through several channels, including communication between the local government and educational institutions, as well as the program’s technical implementers, through coordination, consolidation, monitoring, and data-driven program evaluation, to ensure that the distribution of nutritious food proceeds in accordance with operational standards. Next, communication takes place between the local government and the media through publications, the dissemination of information on program implementation, and press conferences as efforts to enhance program transparency and accountability. Additionally, communication between the government and the public is conducted through program outreach, public forums, and feedback responses regarding the implementation of the MBG program in the field.

Globally, stunting remains a major health issue. Data from reports by UNICEF, the WHO, and the World Bank indicate that, in 2022, approximately 148 million children under the age of five worldwide were stunted, with the majority of cases occurring in developing countries such as those in Asia and Africa. This indicates that malnutrition is a major global problem and challenge that impacts human capital (World Health Organization, 2023). At the national level in Indonesia, according to data from the Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey, the prevalence of stunting in 2022 was 21.6%, meaning the stunting rate remains higher than the national target of 14%. Consequently, a multisectoral intervention is required, including through child nutrition programs (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2023). Consequently, the Indonesian government has established a program aimed at reducing stunting rates through a comprehensive strategic approach that expands access to healthcare services, ensures adequate nutrition, provides clean water, and offers adequate sanitation facilities (Prendergast & Humphrey, 2014; Hoddinott et al., 2013).

Comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated cross-sectoral efforts are needed to accelerate the reduction of stunting rates (Tawai, 2025). It is essential to ensure that nutrition interventions are effectively implemented, recognizing the critical role of collaboration among the central government, local governments, the health and education sectors, and the community. In addition to providing nutritious meals, it is also necessary to provide family education, particularly regarding maternal and child health, as well as environmental sanitation (Permana et al., 2025). Collective nutrition interventions have the

potential to be more successful in reducing stunting rates compared to relying solely on separate sectoral approaches (Bhutta et al., 2013; Ruel & Alderman, 2013). Therefore, emphasizing sustainable nutrition is crucial for reducing stunting more rapidly, and it is also necessary to ensure access to health services, healthy family planning, and good child-rearing practices (Martony, 2023).

Meeting the nutritional needs of children, particularly those of school age, is one of the key national priorities, given the importance of children’s growth and development. Previous studies have indicated that the Free Nutritious Meals program can improve children’s cognitive abilities, student attendance, and nutritional status (Agustini, 2025). Additionally, the Free Nutritious Meals program in schools can encourage the consumption of local foods and enhance local food security (Agustin et al., 2026). The Free Nutritious Meals program is crucial for preventing stunting and improving the health of the younger generation in West Java, a region with a substantial school-age population. Therefore, to achieve Indonesia’s Golden Age by 2045, this program represents a sustainable long-term investment aimed at fostering a superior, competitive, and productive workforce.

Table 1. Comparison of the number of school-age children

Province	Ages 5–9 Years	Ages 10–14 Years	Ages 15–19 Years	Years Total School-Age
West Java	3.878.696	3.869.748	4.037.759	11.786.203
Central Java	2.691.585	2.753.481	2.791.354	8.236.420
East Java	2.832.430	2.938.310	2.955.250 (±)	8.725.990 (±)

Source : (Central Bureau of Statistics of Central Java, 2022; Central Bureau of Statistics of East Java, 2024; Central Bureau of Statistics of Bandung Regency, 2024)

Based on **Table 1**, the data shows that the number of school-age children in West Java is approximately 11.7 million, higher than in East Java approximately 8.7 million, and Central Java approximately 8.2 million. This indicates that West Java has a much greater need for school-based nutrition interventions compared to Central and East Java. Therefore, the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) in this region is more strategic and crucial for enhancing the quality of healthy and high-performing human resources. From a policy perspective, a region with a large student population naturally requires a food distribution system characterized by strong coordination and collaborative communication, encompassing a broad and complex group of beneficiaries. Consequently, this study is highly relevant for examining aspects of collaborative communication in the implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, as a district within a province with a large number of school-age children in Indonesia.

The urgency of this study lies in the fact that the success of the MBG program’s implementation cannot be assessed solely based on its broad coverage of the student population; rather, it must also be evaluated based on the effectiveness of measurable benefits that are directly felt by the intended recipients. Furthermore, a program should not be viewed solely from an administrative perspective but also in terms of the extent to which it produces tangible impacts on the target group (Rahayu et al., 2024). Evaluating a program’s effectiveness necessarily involves assessing the success of its intended impacts, particularly regarding improvements in children’s and students’ nutritional status, health, and community well-being (Rahmah et al., 2025). In the context of public policy, the effectiveness of a policy is influenced by several aspects, namely the quality of implementation, coordination among institutions, and the involvement of stakeholders (Cahyono, 2026). Therefore, when analyzing the implementation of this nutritious meal program, it is important to ensure that this policy provides benefits and is on target.

Thus, collaborative communication among the government, the media, and the public plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of public policies (Cahyono, 2026). From a governance perspective, a policy is shaped through interactions between government leaders, the public, and the media, with the media serving as a watchdog within the social media sphere (Fahmi, 2025; Rejeki & Solihin, 2026).

This collaborative approach fosters transparency, accountability, and public participation in policy implementation. Previous research has found that participatory and open policy communication can help increase public trust and the effectiveness of social program implementation (Emerson et al., 2012). The media serves as a bridge between the government and the public, fostering public dialogue and shaping public opinion regarding a policy (Nurdin & Syahrudin, 2025).

In addition, the effectiveness of policy communication is influenced by other factors, namely the social and cultural sensitivities of the community. One-way communication tends to generate resistance because the community is not involved in the public policy-making process (Siagian et al., 2026). Empathetic and participatory policies can improve public acceptance and strengthen a policy's legitimacy. In policy communication, the success of a social program is influenced by an adaptive communication approach that engages directly with the community shaping the social order (Nuryana et al., 2025). Therefore, the communication strategy must emphasize humanistic values, social solidarity, and shared responsibility, which are crucial elements for the successful implementation of this free nutrition program.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the theory of collaborative governance through the Triple Helix approach, which analyzes the interactions among three key actors: the government, the media, and the public. The interaction among these three actors fosters collaborative communication, encompassing several aspects: information exchange, policy coordination, and the building of public and stakeholder trust. This framework is used to analyze collaborative communication capable of enhancing and strengthening the fulfillment of inclusive nutritional access through the sustainable MBG program in Bandung Regency.

Based on this, this study aims to examine collaborative communication between the government, the media, and the community in implementing inclusive nutrition access through the Free Nutritious School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency. The urgency of this study lies in the need to strengthen the collaborative communication approach to meet the needs and ensure the effectiveness of the MBG program, given the large number of beneficiaries; furthermore, challenges in coordination, information gaps, and varying levels of public participation will influence the success of the program. Without a strong collaborative communication approach, this inclusive nutrition program is vulnerable to risks of fragmentation, lack of transparency, and insufficient responsiveness to core needs. Therefore, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of how stakeholders interact, as well as the communication and coordination efforts undertaken to enhance policy effectiveness, in order to ensure this program delivers significant and measurable impacts in meeting nutritional needs for human resource development.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on cooperative communication among three key stakeholders, the government, the media, and the community, in building an integrated approach, both institutionally and through digital information systems, to promote inclusive nutrition fulfillment via the nutritious meal program. Unlike previous studies that examined nutrition programs solely from administrative and health perspectives, this study also highlights the dynamics occurring in cross-sectoral communication and coordination, as well as participatory governance as key elements in the program's success. This collaborative communication approach can, in the future, enhance information transparency, strengthen public participation, and ensure program sustainability through adaptive and participatory policy communication. This program should not be viewed merely as a short-term initiative but as a long-term investment in human resources.

Research Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design (Creswell W, 2018). This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the collaborative communication processes among policy actors namely, the government, the media, and the

public in the implementation of inclusive nutrition through the MBG program. This qualitative research allows the researcher to explore social phenomena occurring through direct interaction with informants and within the context of complex policy dynamics (Handoko et al., 2024). In research on collaborative governance, a descriptive qualitative approach is used to analyze the interaction processes among the involved actors, including the communication patterns employed, as well as the factors supporting and hindering collaboration in implementing the program.

The research design employed is a case study on the implementation of inclusive nutrition through the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program in Bandung Regency. A case study was chosen because this research focuses on a specific phenomenon related to a particular program or policy within a specific regional context (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022), thus requiring an in-depth analysis of the collaborative communication processes among the involved stakeholder actors. Data collection techniques in this study include in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with 5 informants who are key actors involved in the MBG program, such as local governments, schools, local media, and beneficiary communities. In this study, the inclusion criteria for informants were individuals directly involved in the implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, namely stakeholders who play a direct role through communication or coordination within the program; therefore, the selected informants were those with sufficient knowledge of the technical aspects of the program's implementation. The exclusion criteria in this study were individuals not directly involved in the MBG program that is, other actors who lacked knowledge or understanding of the communication or coordination processes in implementing this program, where informants provided incomplete information or information that could not be verified by the researcher.

The observations in this study were conducted over a three-month period (January–March 2026) in Bandung Regency, which was selected as the implementation area for the MBG program. The observations focused on several aspects, including coordination meetings among stakeholders, the distribution process of nutritious food from the SPPG to schools, and communication channels between the government, the media, and the public. Additionally, the monitoring process was supported by the use of the Bandung Regency MBG dashboard to conduct field monitoring and evaluation. This was done to directly observe the technical implementation of policy communication in the field. Furthermore, the documentation in this study is necessary for analyzing policies, program reports, and media publications related to MBG implementation, which are utilized in collaborative governance research to obtain comprehensive primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained, among other sources, from the Bandung Regency government dashboard monitoring MBG implementation. It was also sourced from official Bandung Regency reports, local media coverage on MBG implementation, MBG policy documents and technical guidelines, and statistical data on beneficiaries and SPPG distribution. This data was further used to support interview findings and strengthen contextual analysis.

Data analysis in this study employed interactive qualitative analysis, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014). This process consists of the following steps: first, Data Collection, involving the gathering of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Second, Data Reduction, by selecting relevant information related to collaborative communication. Third, Data Presentation, by organizing the data into interpretations based on the roles of the government, media, and the public in their involvement in the MBG program. Fourth, Drawing Conclusions, by identifying patterns of collaborative communication in the implementation of MBG. Fifth, Verification, by conducting triangulation through interviews, observations, and secondary data. This analysis was conducted by categorizing research findings based on collaborative governance indicators through the involved actors, such as communication among government actors, institutional coordination, public participation, and the media's role in disseminating information. This analysis was used to comprehensively explain the effectiveness of governance communication in the implementation

of the MBG program in Bandung Regency.

Results and Discussion

The Nutritious Free Meal Program (MBG) is one of the government's strategic policies during President Prabowo's administration, designed to improve nutritional status, particularly among students, toddlers, and pregnant or breastfeeding women, as part of an effort to enhance human capital quality (Lendra et al., 2025). The MBG program focuses not only on meeting nutritional needs but also on improving concentration during learning, increasing student attendance, and reducing the economic burden on families. Previous studies have shown that the MBG contributes to improved child nutritional status and has a positive impact on the education sector, particularly in increasing student participation and academic performance at school (Agustini, 2025). Additionally, the MBG program has a positive impact on students' cognitive development, including helping to improve learning motivation and classroom engagement (Seventilofa, 2025). The implementation of the MBG program in various regions across Indonesia has also yielded positive outcomes, including improved nutritional intake, learning focus, student attendance, and family well-being. However, in some areas, the MBG program has not been fully optimized. This program also helps students, particularly by reducing learning barriers caused by malnutrition among school-age children (Astri Yuliana et al., 2025). The existence of the MBG program has an impact on improving children's nutritional status, reducing the risk of stunting, and increasing student attendance at school. These impacts demonstrate that the nutritious meal program is not merely a health intervention but also a strategy to enhance the quality of education for students (Mowilos et al., 2025).

The success of implementing the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency also depends on the effectiveness of collaborative communication among stakeholders. Collaborative communication serves as a crucial mechanism for aligning and clarifying role distribution, as well as accelerating problem-solving within the local government in implementing this program. This program involves other stakeholders, including the School Nutrition Program (PPPG), educational institutions, food suppliers, and the community. Therefore, there must be a space for open and well-coordinated communication, particularly in the processes of beneficiary data collection, food distribution, nutritional quality monitoring, and program implementation reporting to ensure these activities run smoothly on the ground. This research indicates that a collaborative communication model in the implementation of a policy or program helps improve cross-sectoral coordination, reduce policy overlap, and strengthen accountability in the implementation of social programs at the local level (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In the context of the Free Nutritious School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency, strengthening collaborative communication is key to addressing several issues that have arisen, including human resource limitations, service disparities across regions, and real-time monitoring, to ensure the program runs effectively and accurately for beneficiaries and remains sustainable.

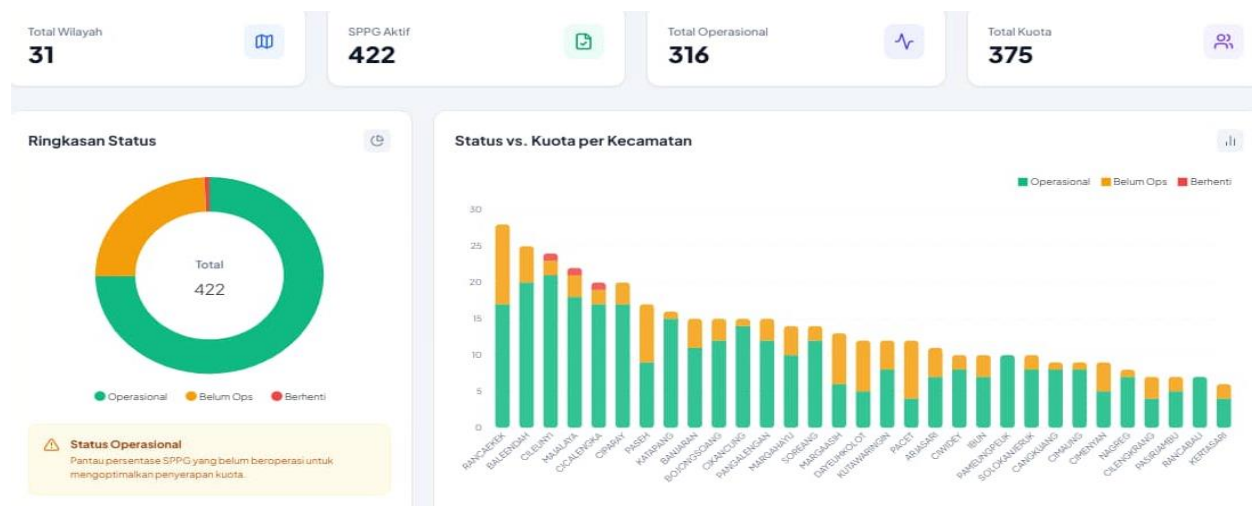
The implementation of the Free Nutritious School Lunch Program in Bandung Regency is a crucial component of implementing national policies at the local or regional level. As an area with a large number of beneficiaries, Bandung Regency requires strong governance, coordination among stakeholders, and an effective monitoring system (Akbar et al., 2025). The implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency is also expected not only to improve students' nutritional quality but also to promote local socioeconomic stability through the involvement of business actors, particularly by strengthening the local food supply. Therefore, research on the implementation of inclusive nutrition fulfillment through the MBG program in Bandung Regency is crucial to assess institutional readiness, implementation effectiveness, and the challenges faced in efforts to achieve a program that is targeted and sustainable (Hastuti & Hariyadi, 2026; Jati et al., 2025).

Collaborative communication between the government, the media, and the community is crucial for the successful implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG), particularly at the local level such as in Bandung Regency. The involvement of various actors is an integral part of program implementation, where this collaboration is carried out through the Triple Helix approach, which emphasizes interaction, coordination, and trust-building among the involved actors to enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2013; Suherman et al., 2021). Furthermore, the success of a program is significantly influenced by two key factors: cross-stakeholder coordination and effective, interactive public communication (Maulana et al., 2026; Rahim et al., 2025).

1. Government

The Bandung Regency Government continues to strengthen its preparations for the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) through a Consolidation Meeting of the Nutrition Service Units (SPPG) in the Bandung Regency, held in Soreang. This consolidation activity serves as a strategic step to unify perspectives, build synergy, and strengthen coordination among local governments, implementing partners, and the SPPG so that the program can run smoothly and reach all beneficiaries as its target group. Additionally, this technical coordination forum is expected to support inflation control in the region by strengthening the local food supply chain, as well as enhancing the readiness of Bandung Regency a region with a large number of beneficiaries in implementing the MBG program (Bandung Regency Health Office, 2025).

In implementing the MBG program, the Bandung Regency Government has identified several key challenges still faced during program implementation, including delays in technical operational processes, limited human resources—particularly nutrition experts, disparities in the number of SPPGs across each sub-district, a concentration of beneficiary quotas in specific areas, and challenges in the data collection process, as well as suboptimal activation of some SPPGs in implementing this program. To address these various issues, the Bandung Regency government has developed an SPPG dashboard designed to assist in the daily monitoring and evaluation of the MBG program’s implementation, ensuring that oversight is conducted in a more transparent, accountable, and real-time data-driven manner. Furthermore, this effort is reinforced by institutional support through a shared commitment among various stakeholders, including the affirmation that the Nutritious Free School Lunch Program is a constitutional mandate that must be implemented to the best of our ability, upholding the values of integrity, effectiveness, and a focus on improving the nutritional quality of the community.



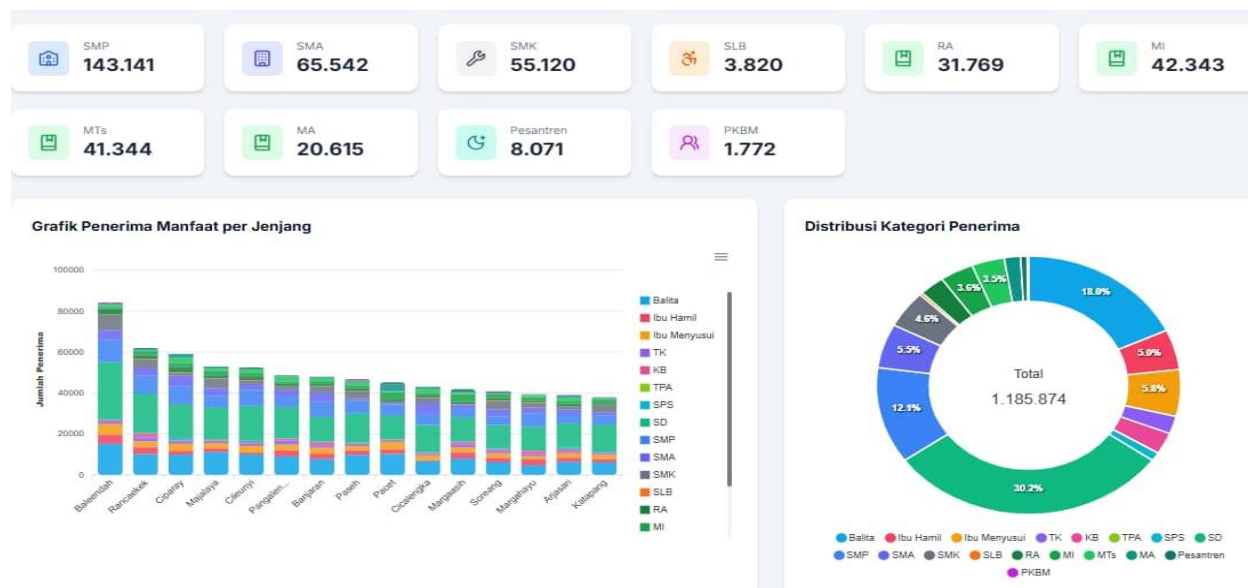


Figure 1. SPPG Dashboard for Bandung Regency. Source: Pemerintah Kabupaten Bandung, 2026.

Based on Figure 1, it shows that approximately 75% of the Nutrition Service Units (SPPG) are operational, while the remainder are still inactive, and a small portion have ceased operations. The gap between available SPPGs particularly active ones indicates that there are several challenges in their implementation, including limitations in human resources, specifically nutritionists and food safety personnel; delays in the readiness of existing infrastructure; and administrative verification processes that must be completed before the program’s full-scale operation can begin. In some locations, SPPGs are physically available but cannot yet operate due to incomplete kitchen facilities, food supply chain constraints, and coordination issues between schools and MBG partners. Such situations indicate uneven service capacity and an increased workload for SPPGs that are already operational.

Additionally, the “Status vs. Quota by Subdistrict” graph shows that several subdistricts, including Rancaekek, Baleendah, and Cileunyi, have a large number of SPPGs, yet many remain non-operational. This imbalance occurs because areas with higher population densities and a larger number of beneficiaries require greater logistical preparation, including food procurement, distribution mechanisms, and staffing needs. Additionally, differences in geographical accessibility, the readiness of MBG partners, and varying levels of institutional coordination across subdistricts also affect the operational speed of SPPG kitchens. Consequently, this leads to delays in SPPG operations in high-demand areas, resulting in uneven distribution and the potential for operational units to become overburdened. Therefore, accelerating the activation of SPPGs, strengthening coordination, and improving the allocation of available resources are necessary to ensure fairer and more equitable distribution as part of efforts to optimize MBG program services.

As seen in the graph above, the distribution of beneficiaries by subdistrict in Bandung Regency reveals that the highest number of beneficiaries is found in subdistricts with high population density, such as Baleendah, Rancaekek, Ciparay, Majalaya, and Dayeuhkolot. Meanwhile, subdistricts with lower numbers of beneficiaries include Cimenyan, Kutawaringin, and Kertasari. This disparity indicates that the distribution of Free School Lunch Program (MBG) beneficiaries follows population density and the number of educational institutions in each sub-district. However, given the variation in beneficiary numbers across sub-districts, adjustments to the SPPG’s capacity are necessary to ensure service distribution is more equitable and comprehensive.

The Bandung Regency Government plays a strategic role in fostering collaborative communication as an effort to effectively implement the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) through the strengthening of a dashboard-based SPPG monitoring system and by addressing findings directly in the field. The use of the MBG dashboard enables local governments to monitor in real-time the number of beneficiaries, the operational status of SPPGs, and quota disparities across sub-districts, thereby facilitating rapid, data-driven decision-making by the government (Farid et al., 2025). The information obtained from this SPPG dashboard is then followed up through inter-agency coordination, communication with service providers, and on-site evaluations to ensure operational issues can be promptly resolved (Sitanggang & Prasojo, 2025). Inter-agency coordination is conducted through regular coordination meetings involving the Bandung Regency local government, the health department, the education department, the SPPG Director, and school representatives to discuss beneficiary data, MBG distribution schedules, and food quality standards that must be met. For example, when the SPPG dashboard identifies a quota imbalance in a specific sub-district within Bandung Regency, the education department coordinates with schools to verify student numbers, while the health department conducts an inspection of nutritional standards and compliance with food safety protocols in the SPPG kitchen. This coordination enables stakeholders to synchronize data and resolve issues on the ground.

Communication with the SPPG MBG service provider in Bandung Regency is conducted through technical briefings and a reporting mechanism that connects the government with SPPG operators and food suppliers for SPPG kitchens. Based on the available information, the SPPG service provider reports daily production capacity, distribution coverage, and operational challenges, such as shortages of raw materials or limited kitchen capacity. Additionally, field evaluations are conducted through direct site visits by the Bandung Regency local government team, verifying dashboard data and directly observing on-site conditions. These evaluations typically cover several aspects, including checking kitchen readiness, food preparation processes, hygiene standards, and the timeliness of distribution to schools. Field monitoring also involves feedback from school stakeholders, including principals, teachers, and students regarding food quality and delivery schedules. The results of these evaluations are then used as the basis for follow-up actions, such as improving logistics management, hiring additional staff, or activating additional SPPG units. This approach serves as a collaborative communication practice that integrates the government, technical implementers, public information media, and the community into a unified monitoring system. The policy of using the SPPG dashboard, combined with collaborative communication among stakeholders, can enhance transparency, accelerate community response, and strengthen accountability in the implementation of the MBG program. Thus, the active role of the Bandung Regency Government in utilizing the monitoring dashboard and conducting follow-up actions in the field serves as a crucial instrument in ensuring the MBG program operates effectively in accordance with set targets and remains sustainable.

2. Media

The role of the media in collaborative communication regarding the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency is a key element in promoting transparency, increasing public participation, and strengthening accountability in the program's implementation (E. W. Hidayat, 2024). In this context, the media serves as an information channel to disseminate policy information regarding the FSP program, report on the program's implementation progress, and provide a platform for media oversight of the quality of FSP services on the ground. Through the publication of data on beneficiaries, the operational status of the SPPG, and technical issues, the media's role is instrumental in bridging communication between the local government particularly in Bandung Regency, and the public, as well as fostering a shared understanding of the objectives and mechanisms of the MBG program (Supriyanto et al., 2024).

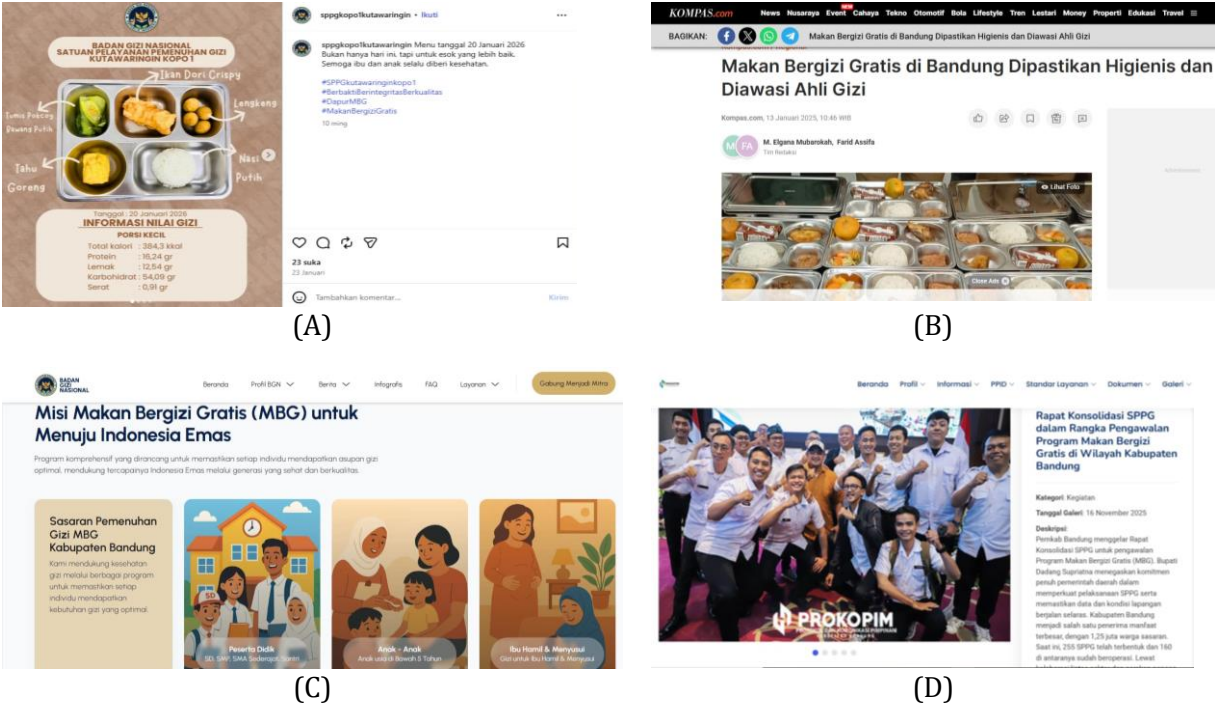


Figure 2. Media Information about MBG in Bandung Regency. Source: (A) Instagram SPPG Kopo 1 Kutawaringin, 2026. (B) Kompas.com, 2025. (C) Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025. (D) Prokopim Kabupaten Bandung, 2025.

As shown in Figure 2, the Media Unit at all MBG (SPPG) kitchens in Bandung Regency also maintains an Instagram account to provide daily operational updates, meal menus, information on school distributions, and documentation of activities. This social media platform plays a crucial role as a collaborative communication tool, connecting the kitchens, the government, schools, and the beneficiary communities. There is also Bandung.Kompas.com, a local West Java media outlet that disseminates information about the implementation of the MBG program, including preparedness initiatives, food distribution, and nutritional quality monitoring for students. It also emphasizes maintaining food hygiene and involves nutritionists in quality monitoring. Furthermore, the media provides information on the schedule for MBG distribution and offers a public feedback channel for the community regarding the MBG program, thereby establishing a two-way communication channel between the government and the public. This helps in disseminating broader information to the public so they can participate in following program developments through media coverage and respond to the implementation of MBG program policies in Bandung Regency. Furthermore, the Bandung Regency MBG Portal serves as part of the public information media’s role, providing details on program implementation, target beneficiaries, and inter-ministerial and local government collaboration. This platform is utilized to communicate the program’s objectives specifically, meeting the nutritional needs of schoolchildren, infants, pregnant women, and vulnerable groups in Bandung Regency through a structured nutrition service system (mbgbandungkab.com, 2026). Local government media also plays a crucial role as the primary information channel in communicating the technical activities of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, which includes coordination, implementation, and program evaluation. Through official publications, the Bandung Regency government reports on the progress of SPPG numbers, beneficiary targets, and cross-sectoral coordination. Among other things, the media reported that the Bandung Regency Government held an SPPG consolidation meeting in the Bandung Regency area to align perceptions and update data, as well as to optimize program implementation by conducting oversight of the MBG program, which

targets approximately 1.25 million beneficiaries (prokopim.bandungkab.go.id, 2025).

The media also plays a role in expanding the program's reach, improving nutrition literacy, and encouraging community involvement in monitoring the distribution of the nutritious food program. In practice, this role of the media can be seen in media coverage reporting on the implementation of the MBG program in schools across the entire Bandung Regency, including information on menu standards, food safety and quality, and distribution schedules. Through such reporting, parents and school officials can clearly understand the nutritional content and objectives of the MBG program, which helps improve nutrition literacy and promote balanced eating among school-age children. Media publications shared with the public are also crucial for communicating the involvement of local food suppliers and hygiene oversight, enabling the public to better understand how the program operates on the ground.

Media coverage often highlights issues related to MBG operations, such as distribution delays, limited kitchen capacity, uneven coverage across subdistricts, and the quality of the food provided. This information encourages the public particularly parents, school officials, and others—to provide feedback and report problems to the SPPG as the service provider. For example, reporting on the use of inappropriate food ingredients for the MBG program and concerns regarding the hygiene of MBG meals. This has drawn public attention to food quality oversight and encouraged schools and parents to monitor food distribution more actively. In this way, media coverage not only disseminates information but also fosters two-way communication, where public feedback plays a crucial role in improving the quality of the program's implementation. In reality, media involvement helps strengthen public awareness, supports participatory monitoring, and enhances the overall effectiveness of the MBG program's implementation. Research indicates that the media plays a strategic role in public policy communication through the MBG program, as it can strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, build public trust, and enhance the effectiveness of government program implementation through the rapid and widespread dissemination of information (Suhendra & Pratiwi, 2024; Tyarini et al., 2023).

The role of the media can also be seen in the dissemination of data-driven information, including information from beneficiaries, the activation of the SPPG, and mitigation measures against potential food safety risks, such as food poisoning. In this regard, information conveyed by the media can foster two-way communication between the government and the public, enabling the government to receive feedback on program implementation. Additionally, the media plays a role in providing public literacy, such as regarding the importance of food safety standards, timely food distribution, and monitoring of nutritional quality for students. This role aligns with the concept of collaborative communication, which positions the media as a connecting actor in the process of information exchange and cross-stakeholder coordination. Other studies indicate that media involvement in policy implementation can enhance transparency, accelerate the government's response to existing issues, and strengthen the policy's legitimacy in the public eye (Aidah et al., 2026; Hamadi, 2024; R. Hidayat et al., 2025). therefore, the media's role is crucial in supporting the success of the MBG program in Bandung Regency as an information disseminator, a source of public education, and a mechanism for social control, thereby strengthening collaborative communication between the government and the public.

Through its functions as an information disseminator, a source of public education, and a mechanism for social control, the media can also report on the progress of program implementation, promote data transparency, and provide a platform for feedback on various issues arising in the field. This role assists local governments, particularly in Bandung Regency, in accelerating policy responses, increasing community participation, and ensuring that the MBG is implemented in accordance with standards and achieves predetermined targets. Thus, the synergy between the

government, the media, and the community forms a collaborative communication ecosystem that supports the effective, accountable, and sustainable implementation of the MBG in Bandung Regency.

3. Community

Community involvement in collaborative communication regarding the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency is essential to ensure the program runs effectively and sustainably. The community plays a role not only as beneficiaries but also as active participants involved in monitoring, providing feedback, and supporting program implementation at the local level. The involvement of parents, schools, posyandu cadres, and community leaders can assist local governments in monitoring the quality of nutritious meals, the accuracy of distribution, and the validity of data on MBG program beneficiaries (Afriaji, 2026; Destiarni, 2024; Faturrahman, 2025). In this context, such community participation reflects two-way communication practices that facilitate information exchange between the government and residents (Putri et al., 2025), enabling technical issues to be promptly identified and resolved swiftly and effectively. This situation strengthens local government accountability through well-coordinated social control mechanisms.

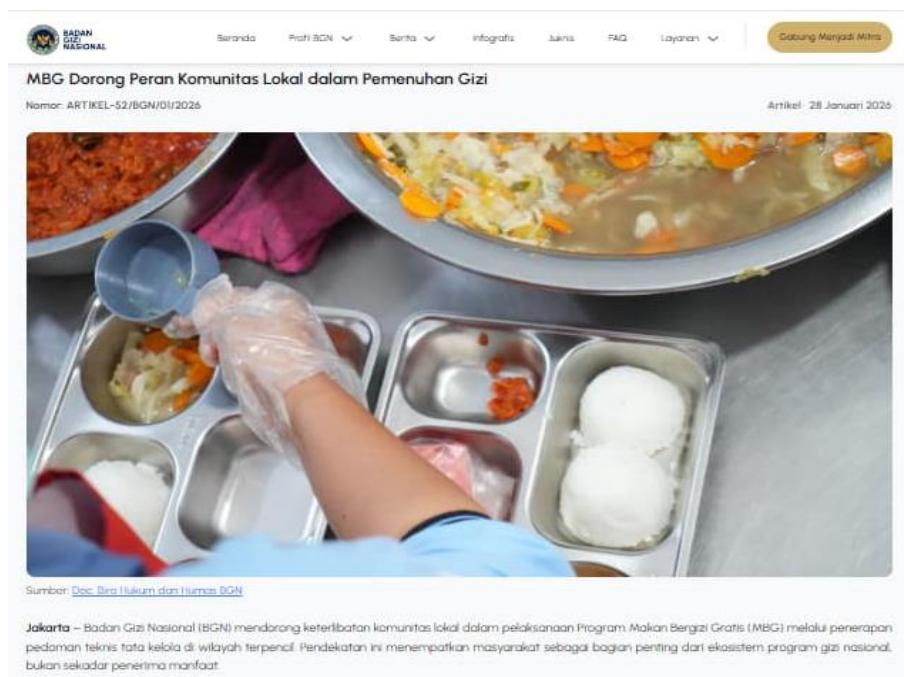


Figure 3. BGN Promotes Local Community Engagement in the MBG Program. Source: BGN, 2025.

Based on Figure 3, the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) emphasizes the importance of local community involvement in the implementation of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG), through technical guidelines for MBG governance that incorporate community participation; specifically, this program will have a significant impact on remote areas. This approach positions the community not only as beneficiaries but also as an integral part of the ecosystem for implementing national nutrition policies at the local level. This strengthening of the community's role is outlined in Decision of the Head of the National Nutrition Agency of the Republic of Indonesia No. 31670 of 2026 on Technical Guidelines for the Governance of the MBG Program in Remote Areas, which serves as the foundation for building a program governance framework oriented toward social impact and community participation. This policy also emphasizes that the success of MBG implementation is not solely the responsibility of the central government but is also influenced by active community involvement at the local level, through an approach that is participatory, adaptive to the social, cultural, and

geographical conditions of the region (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025).

In the context of the MBG program in Bandung Regency, the community also plays a role in strengthening nutrition education and supporting the program’s sustainability. The community can provide feedback on the quality of MBG food—such as distribution delays or other operational issues at the SPPG through communication forums facilitated by the local government or the media (Afriaji, 2026). Furthermore, the involvement of local businesses and community groups in food provision contributes to strengthening the local food supply chain while also having an impact on boosting the local economy (Khatmawati & Putri, 2026; Zubaedah & Sirait, 2025).

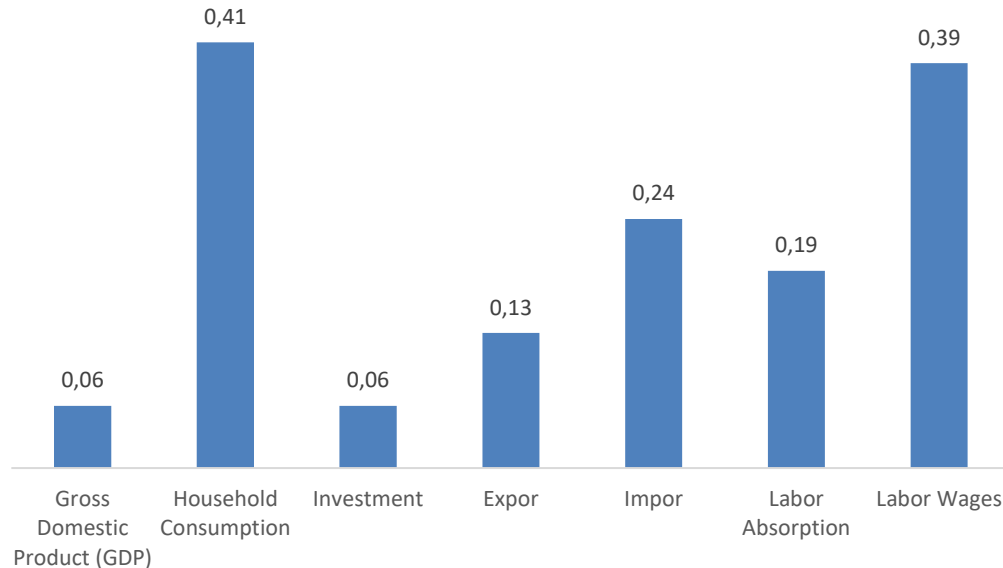


Figure 4. The impact of the budget allocation for the MBG program on the national economy

Based on Figure 4, the impact of the budget allocation for the MBG program on the national economy is as follows (INDEF, 2024) :

- 1) The budget allocation for the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program, amounting to Rp 71 trillion in 2025, is projected to boost GDP growth by 0.06 percent, or Rp 14.61 trillion in 2025 current prices.
- 2) The MBG program budget allocation can boost labor absorption by 0.19 percent and increase labor wages by 0.39 percent.
- 3) The allocation of MBG program spending will drive higher import growth compared to export growth and domestic investment. Therefore, the MBG program should be decentralized to utilize local food sources and raw materials, thereby reducing distribution costs, lowering import values, and improving the welfare of farmers and MSMEs.

In this context, the community acts as a partner to the government in establishing collaborative communication focused on joint problem-solving. The success of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG), which aims to provide public services, is greatly influenced by the level of community participation; this is because collaborative communication involving residents can encourage and accelerate the optimal achievement of the program’s objectives, thereby ensuring the successful implementation of the MBG program in Bandung Regency.

This study's findings indicate that collaborative communication among the government, media, and the public strengthens coordination networks to enhance the effectiveness of the Free School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of collaborative governance in public service (Fonataba, 2025). Additionally, this study found that community participation strengthens transparency and engagement in policy implementation (Ndraha et al., 2024). However, some studies present differing findings. Some studies indicate that collaborative governance does not automatically enhance program effectiveness due to weak coordination mechanisms, unclear authority, and limited communication channels (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012), indicating that collaboration can fail when stakeholder roles are not clearly defined, or when communication is not supported by a robust monitoring system. This contrasts with the findings of this study, where collaborative communication in Bandung Regency is strengthened by dashboard-based monitoring, field evaluations, and media engagement. The presence of structured coordination and real-time information systems is expected to address the issues identified in previous research.

Conclusions and Limitations

This study found that collaborative communication between the government, the media, and the public plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of the Free Nutritious School Lunch Program (MBG) in Bandung Regency. The government acts as the primary coordinator through policy guidance, dashboard-based monitoring, and follow-up on field findings; the media contributes by disseminating information, improving nutrition literacy, and supporting transparency; and the community participates in monitoring distribution, providing feedback, and supporting the local food supply chain. This interaction among actors forms a triple-helix collaborative communication model that strengthens coordination, enhances accountability, accelerates problem-solving, and improves the effectiveness of the MBG program in Bandung Regency. Collaborative communication supported by digital monitoring systems and the involvement of local stakeholders contributes to expanding the program's reach to ensure inclusive access to nutritious food for school-age children.

This study also has several limitations. First, the study focuses solely on Bandung Regency, thereby limiting generalizability to other regions with different administrative and socio-economic characteristics. Second, the qualitative approach relies on stakeholder perceptions, which may not fully capture the quantitative impact on nutritional outcomes from this MBG program. Third, the communication process has not comprehensively measured the program's long-term effectiveness. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct cross-regional comparative studies, integrate quantitative measurements of nutritional and educational outcomes, and analyze the sustainability of the collaborative communication model using a mixed-methods approach.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of the concept of collaborative governance and the Triple Helix communication model by demonstrating how the interaction between government, media, and the public plays a role in implementing nutritious food programs. Practically, these findings provide a collaborative communication framework that local governments can use to strengthen coordination, enhance transparency, and increase stakeholder participation in public service programs, particularly the MBG program. From a governance and organizational perspective, this study highlights the importance of integrating information systems through digital dashboards, cross-agency coordination, media engagement, and community-based monitoring. The study's findings underscore the novelty of the research, which presents a collaborative communication model supported by real-time monitoring and the involvement of the local supply chain to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the MBG program.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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