

Bridging the Gap: Integrating Nutrition and Health Equity for Indigenous Youth in Indonesia–Malaysia Border Regions



- Agus Fitriangga, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia
- Eka Ardiani Putri, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia
- Alex Alex, Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia

Introduction

Indigenous youth in border regions face unique and persistent health inequities due to geographic isolation, socio-political marginalization, and limited access to essential services. In the Indonesia–Malaysia border area of Entikong, West Kalimantan, Dayak Bidayuh communities experience high rates of child malnutrition and poor health literacy. Despite multiple national and regional interventions, disparities remain.

Objective

explores integrated community-based approaches to address structural determinants of health among indigenous youth in this transboundary context

Image Title

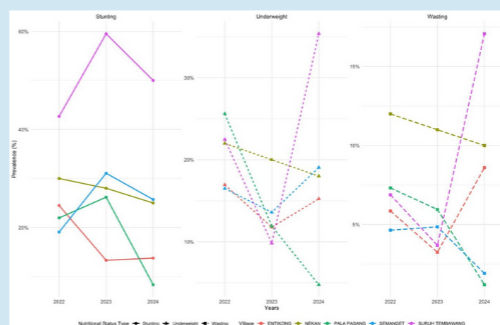


Methodology

We used a mixed-methods approach. A cross-sectional household survey (n=450 children under 18) assessed nutritional status using e-PPGBM surveillance data (2022–2024) and anthropometric measurements (WAZ, HAZ, WHZ). We conducted multivariable logistic regression to identify predictors of malnutrition. Qualitatively, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews and 6 focus group discussions with adolescents, parents, community leaders, and health workers. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's framework, identifying cultural, institutional, and environmental drivers of nutritional disparities

Results

Quantitative analysis revealed a 39.2% prevalence of stunting and 18.5% underweight among indigenous children, with maternal education (aOR: 2.91; 95% CI: 1.82–4.64) and household food insecurity (aOR: 3.26; 95% CI: 2.04–5.18) recognized as important predictors. Qualitative findings highlighted the degradation of indigenous food systems, distrust in state-sponsored efforts, and youth disconnection from health care



Conclusion

Integrating indigenous perspectives and empowering youth in co-creating health strategies can bridge long-standing equity gaps in border regions. Our findings support a paradigm shift from top-down to community-led multisectoral interventions. These results inform both Indonesian and ASEAN regional policy discussions on health equity, indigenous inclusion, and demographic transitions in peripheral geographies.

Key Sources

- Kementerian Kesehatan RI. Dashboard Elektronik Pencatatan dan Pelaporan Gizi Berbasis Masyarakat (E-PPGBM), 2022–2024. Jakarta: Direktorat Gizi Masyarakat, Kemenkes RI.
- WHO. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024

Recommendations

future studies could assess the effectiveness of current government programs and local health initiatives in reducing malnutrition over time. Integrating remote sensing or geospatial modeling with routine health data could further refine the identification of malnutrition hotspots and predict emerging vulnerabilities, particularly in the context of climate change, food insecurity, and cross-border population movement