

Optimising Child-Friendly Districts: Overcoming Challenges in West Aceh Regency

Fitriah Hildhah¹, Vellayati Hajad^{✉2}, Herizal³, Ikhsan⁴, and Dista Setyaningsih⁵

^{1,2,4}Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Teuku Umar

³Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Erciyes University, Kayseri, Türkiye

⁵Center for Learning and Performance Management Strategy (Pusjar SKMK), LAN RI

[✉]Alue Peunyareng Street, Gunong Kleng, Meureubo District, West Aceh, Aceh 23681, Indonesia

[✉]vellavati.hajad@utu.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Service in implementing the Child-Friendly Areas concept in West Aceh Regency, as mandated by the West Aceh Regent Regulation Number 40 of 2018. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation with six informants. Findings indicate that while the policy aspect has been implemented optimally, the strategy and communication roles have not been effective. Key obstacles include insufficient human resources, facilities, budget, and inter-organizational communication. Additionally, public awareness of the Child-Friendly District status remains low. Despite ongoing efforts, significant improvements are needed to achieve optimal implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Child-Friendly Areas were first introduced by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia in 2005. This concept was introduced through a policy that aims to create an environment that supports children's rights. By integrating commitments and resources from the government, community, and business world (Hesti & Intiza, 2020). The Child-Friendly Areas Policy is a strategic step in child rights-based development. This is done by integrating various components involved, starting from policy planning, programs, to activities carried out by various parties (Darmayanti & Lipoeto, 2020; Riadi et al., 2022).

The local government, in this case, plays a central role in ensuring that every policy implemented leads to the achievement of the Child-Friendly Areas goals (Dahlia, 2022). In addition, the community and business world are also actively involved in providing the necessary support and resources (Nan, 2020). Specifically, the Child-Friendly Areas policy aims to ensure comprehensive and sustainable protection and fulfilment of children's rights by creating conducive conditions for children to grow and develop (Nihayati, 2023). This includes aspects of education, health, protection from violence and exploitation, and the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. By creating this supportive environment, children are expected to reach their full potential in a safe and healthy environment (Haq, 2017; Roza & S, 2018; Yohana, 2018).

The implementation of the Child-Friendly Areas policy has shown progress according to research (Harianti et al., 2020), but still not reaching the optimal level. Study Parneto & Simanjuntak (2022) also concluded that in Kampar Regency, the implementation of the development of Child-Friendly Areas has not been fully maximised because the involvement of all sectors, including government, private sector, and community, has not been fully coordinated. This has resulted in

the slow implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and better protection for children in their environment.

Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 25 of 2014 concerning child health efforts categorises early childhood as 6-18. West Aceh is one of Indonesia's regencies that has implemented the Child-Friendly Areas policy. This regency, located in Aceh Province, has a population of 202,858, and almost a third are children. To see the details of the population by age group, see Table 1 below.

No.	Age Group	Male	Female	Total
1.	5 – 9 Years	8.614	8.162	16.776
2.	10 – 14 Years	8.807	8.626	17.433
3.	15 – 19 Years	8.130	7.693	15.823
Total		25.551	24.481	50.032

Table 1: Population by Age Group and Gender in West Aceh District in 2023
BPS West Aceh Regency (2024) [source]

As seen in Table 1, it can be concluded that the number of children (aged 5-19) in West Aceh Regency is 50,032. Based on these data, it can be seen that 24.7% of the population of West Aceh Regency are children. The West Aceh Regency Government is encouraged to carry out various policies, programs, and activities that ensure that children's rights can be fulfilled.

In 2021, the West Aceh Regency Government received 7 Child-Friendly Areas Awards 2021 in the category of completeness, with the best child forum development. The award received by the West Aceh Regency Government this time was the predicate of Child-Friendly Areas in the Completeness Category. In addition, there are many other categories that received awards, including the initiator towards a child-friendly village, obtained by the village of Pasi Pinang Meureubo. The initiator of the child-friendly school, crowned State Elementary School 1 Percontohan Aceh Barat in first place, then the initiator of the Health Centre with child-friendly services was obtained by the Meureubo Health Centre, the initiator of the child-friendly mosque placed the Baitul Makmur Meulaboh Mosque in first place. Furthermore, the initiator of the child-friendly Islamic boarding school was obtained by the Zainatul Ulum Gampong Ujong Tanjong Islamic boarding school, also in first place (Iskandar, 2021).

Child-Friendly Areas is one of the forms of mandatory government affairs that are not related to basic services, namely related to women's empowerment and child protection, and continues to strive so that every child can fulfill their rights as a child (Chawla, 2016), by trying to optimize the safety of women and children despite still existing obstacles, such as high rates of violence and a lack of public understanding. Efforts undertaken include training, outreach, advocacy, and management of public complaints to increase awareness and protection (Arini et al., 2023). In accordance with the Convention on the Rights, as stated in the West Aceh Regent Regulation Number 40 of 2018 concerning the Establishment of Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh. Legal protection is carried out by the state to realise and fulfil the welfare rights of a child who is a victim of violence and sexual harassment in West Aceh (Hanisah & Maifizar, 2025).

Many victims do not dare to report the sexual violence they have experienced, which is due to the perception in the social environment that this incident is considered a family disgrace. In addition, victims also receive pressure from the perpetrators, which affects their psychological condition, giving rise to feelings of fear and anxiety (Efendi & Kasih, 2022). Figure 1 below shows cases of child violence in West Aceh District.

In 2021, in West Aceh Regency, there were 12 cases of violence against children; in 2022, there were 15 cases, while in 2023 (September data), there were 18 cases of violence against children, where the largest cases occurred in Johan Pahlawan District with 5 cases and Kaway XVI District with 5 cases. The increasing number of violent incidents in West Aceh has made the government continue to strive to improve in overcoming violence by socialising to the community through the 4 P program (Assistance, Protection, Imposition of Sanctions, and Victim Recovery).

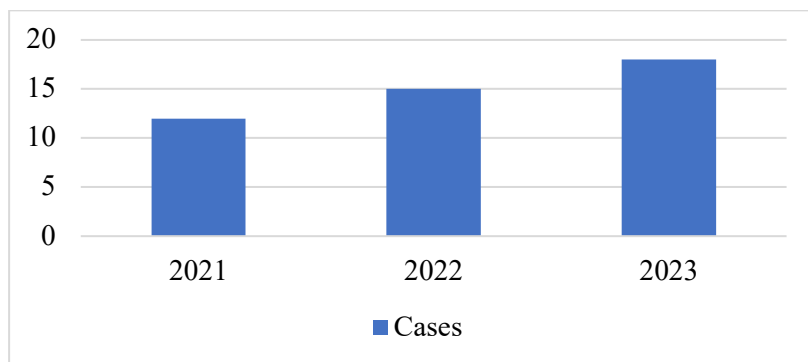


Chart 1: Number of Cases of Violence against Children in West Aceh District
Aceh PPPA Department (2024) [source]

Cases of violence against children in West Aceh Regency increased from 12 in 2021 to 18 by September 2023, with the Johan Pahlawan and Kaway XVI sub-districts accounting for the highest number of cases. The local government responded with the 4Ps program: Assistance, Protection, Sanctions, and Victim Recovery. The Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control Office plays a central role in implementing the Child-Friendly Regency policy. However, implementation remains hampered by the limited preparedness of schools and health centres as child-friendly spaces, necessitating continuous improvement efforts to achieve this goal (Herdiana, 2023). Therefore, further research on Child-Friendly Cities is important, especially regarding the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency in implementing the Child-Friendly Cities policy.

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on in-depth and intensive descriptive case studies (Baskarada, 2014), on the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Service in the implementation of Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh Regency. This approach allows for detailed and contextual disclosure of how the service contributes to achieving the goals of women's empowerment and child protection at the local level. The approach used is a case study with a *single case design*, focusing on one case unit to explore in depth the aspects of the implementation of Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh.

This study involved several key informants who have insight and direct experience related to the implementation of the Child-Friendly Areas policy, namely the Head of the Child Protection and Fulfillment of Rights Section of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency, Acting Secretary of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency, Head of General and Personnel Sub-Division of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency, the West Aceh Children's Forum, and Teachers in West Aceh Regency. Their participation as informants is expected to provide a comprehensive perspective on the challenges, successes, and strategies involved in implementing the program.

Data collection was carried out by collecting primary data, namely through in-depth interviews using purposive sampling techniques. This approach was chosen to ensure the relevance and diversity of information obtained from informants who were directly involved in the implementation of the program. Furthermore, the data was analysed through several stages of analysis, data reduction, data presentation, data verification and conclusions. In data regulation, the collected data was analysed by conducting data reduction, namely the process of sorting and compiling relevant data related to the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service in the implementation of Child-Friendly Areas.

Data analysis started with data reduction, simplifying raw data into matrices or summaries to highlight key findings and patterns. This was followed by data verification, comparing conclusions with supporting data and literature to ensure validity. The process clarifies the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Agency in implementing and improving the Child-Friendly Areas policy in West Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The policy of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection was immediately responded to by the West Aceh District Government by directly appointing the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh District as the leading sector in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of mainstreaming of children's rights that have been implemented, both in every policy and program, and activities for managing the mainstreaming of children's rights. Management of policies and programs must be in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 11 of 2011 concerning the Policy for Developing Child-Friendly Areas /Cities. Where West Aceh, to be able to hold or obtain the predicate as a Child-Friendly Area, in this case must meet all the requirements contained in the 4 (four) major rights, namely the right to grow and develop, the right to life, the right to protection and the right to participation. All of these rights are described in 31 indicators that have been set in 1 institutional indicator and 5 clusters of children's rights.

The implementation standards for the Child-Friendly Areas /City policy refer to the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 12 of 2011 concerning Indicators for Child-Friendly Areas /City. The policies of the West Aceh Regency Government are related to the Protection and Fulfilment of Children's Rights, both in the form of Regional Regulations, Mayoral Regulations and Mayoral Decrees. Several policies or regulations from the West Aceh Regency Government can be seen in Table 2 below.

Cluster	Indicator	Regional Regulations	About
1	Civil rights and freedoms	-	The right to obtain a birth certificate, receive Child-Friendly information and child participation or the establishment of a children's forum.
2	Family environment and alternative care	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh Number 205 of 2020	Regarding the formation of the management of the West Aceh Regency Family Learning Centre.
3	Basic health and well-being	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh Number 804 of 2019	About the Determination of Child-Friendly Health Centres.
4	Education, leisure time and cultural activities	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh Number 818 of 2019	Regarding the Determination of Child Friendly Schools in West Aceh Regency, namely 6 PAUD, 11 TK, 9 SD/MI and 7 SMP/MTs.
		West Aceh Regent Decree No. 15 of 2020	About the Establishment of the West Aceh Regency Children's Creativity Centre.
		West Aceh Regent Decree No. 456 of 2020	About the Designation/Determination of Child-Friendly Mosques in West Aceh Regency.
5	Special protection	-	If efforts to fulfil children's rights are successful, there will be no cluster V.
6	Establishment of Child-Friendly Areas	SK Bupati Aceh Barat No 803 Tahun 2019	About the Determination of Child-Friendly Villages in West Aceh Regency.

Table 2: Regional Regulation of West Aceh Regency Concerning Child-Friendly Cities
Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service (DP3AKB) West Aceh Regency (2024) [source]

Based on Table 2 above, it can be explained that in the Child-Friendly Areas program, there are 5 clusters, but from the 5 clusters, the West Aceh Regency government has made a policy for 3 clusters, namely clusters II, III and IV, while for clusters I and V, there are none yet. Cluster I talks about civil rights and children's freedoms, namely: (1) Birth certificates, where children in West Aceh Regency have received birth certificates in 2023 reaching 86.34%; (2) Child-Friendly Information consisting of reading corners and mobile libraries; (3) Children's participation, namely by forming children's forums, namely the West Aceh Children's Forum, the Meureubo District Children's Forum, the Johan

Pahlawan District Children's Forum, the Kuta Padang Village Children's Forum and the Cot Seumeureung Village Children's Forum.

Cluster II talks about family environment and alternative care, namely about child marriage, family consultation institutions, which is based on the Decree of the Regent of West Aceh No. 205 of 2019 concerning the establishment of the management of the West Aceh Regency family learning centre. Cluster III talks about basic health and welfare, namely about childbirth in health facilities, nutrition, stunting, Infant and Child Feeding, health facilities with child-friendly services, sanitation and the creation of Smoke-Free Areas and a ban on cigarette advertising, promotion and sponsorship. The policy in cluster III is the Decree of the Regent of West Aceh Number 804 of 2019 concerning the Determination of Child-Friendly Health Centres. Meanwhile, Cluster IV is related to education, utilisation of free time and cultural activities, namely about child-friendly schools. The basis of cluster IV can be seen in Table 3 below.

No.	Legal basis	Implementation Location
1.	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh Number 818 of 2019 concerning the Determination of Child-Friendly Schools in West Aceh Regency.	Consisting of 6 PAUD, 11 TK, 9 SD/MI and 7 SMP/MTs. Located in:
2.	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh No. 15 of 2020 concerning the Establishment of the Children's Creativity Centre of West Aceh Regency. Children's Creativity Centre of West Aceh Regency.	Meuligoe Barat Studio, led by Ardinal Hidayat, S.Pd Dara Kejora Studio, led by Nur Aidah- Iwan Gunawan West Aceh Regency Children's Forum, led by Ferenindi Bayeung Setia Studio, led by MasriHanif, SP Potirak Kubu Pencak Silat Arena, led by Minsyahril
3.	Decree of the Regent of West Aceh No. 456 of 2020 concerning the Designation/Determination of Child-Friendly Mosques in West Aceh Regency. As for the child-friendly mosques in West Aceh Regency.	Located in: The Great Mosque of Baitul Makmur Meulaboh The Nurul Huda Mosque of Kampung Belakang Village The Al-Muqaddas Mosque of Kuta Padang Village The Grand Mosque of Baiturrahim Babussalam Ujong Baroh Village The Grand Mosque of At Taqwa Suak Nie Village The Nurul Mukmin Mosque of Pasi Pinang Village The Grand Mosque of Darul Hikmah The Grand Mosque of Babul Khairat Baro Pantan Reu Village The Baiturrahim Mosque of Cot Seumeureung Village

Table 3: Legal Basis and Location of Implementation of Cluster IV Child-Friendly Districts in West Aceh District
Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service (DP3AKB) West Aceh Regency (2024) [source]

In Cluster V, it talks about special protection. This Cluster V is needed if the efforts to fulfill children's rights are successful, then there is no Cluster V. Based on Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, it states that the Central Government, Regional Governments, and other state institutions are obliged and responsible for providing Special Protection to: 1) children in emergency situations, 2) children in conflict with the law, 3) children from minority and isolated groups, 4) children who are economically exploited, 5) children who are victims of abuse of narcotics, alcohol, psychotropic drugs, and other addictive substances, 6) children who are victims of pornography, 7) children with HIV and AIDS, 8) children who are victims of kidnapping, 9) children who are victims of physical violence, 10) children who are victims of sexual crimes, 11) children who are victims of terrorist networks, 12) children with disabilities, 13) children who are victims of mistreatment, 14) children with deviant social behavior and 15) children who are victims of stigmatization from labeling related to the condition of their parents.

In addition, based on the Decree of the Regent of West Aceh No. 803 of 2019 concerning the Determination of Child-Friendly Villages in West Aceh Regency, it was decided that 42 villages were designated as child-friendly villages. The form of community empowerment through the Child-Friendly Village formation program is that the government makes program policies to fulfil children's rights in Indonesia, especially in West Aceh Regency, in a targeted and sustainable manner. West Aceh Regency is one of the regencies that runs the Child-Friendly Village program, which is supported by the government and assisted by one of them, the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency.

Role As Strategy

The implementation model of the Child-Friendly Areas program uses a Top-Down approach, with the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency as the party in fulfilling children's rights in the West Aceh Regency environment. In this case, the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency is positioned as Deputy Chair of the Child-Friendly Areas Task Force, which is tasked with mandating the main tasks and functions to each agency responsible for each cluster. The West Aceh Regency Government has implemented the stages of developing a Child-Friendly Area as mandated in Regent Regulation Number 40 of 2018 concerning the establishment of Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh Regency. The regulation was then followed by several policies that showed that the West Aceh Regency Government has a high commitment to developing Child-Friendly Areas.

In the implementation of Child-Friendly District based on the results of research in the field, researchers encountered several main obstacles: ~~namely the following~~, first, the lack of funding to fulfill Child-Friendly cities in West Aceh Regency which is still inadequate, second, the lack of coordination between and other agencies in socializing Child-Friendly cities, meaning the lack of cooperation between the government and related agencies, third, the lack of agency members in socializing child-friendly cities, fourth, the non-functioning of the task force that has been formed to socialize child-friendly cities, fifth, communication in socializing Child-Friendly cities carried out by the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency, West Aceh was not conveyed effectively because many other people did not know about Child-Friendly Cities in West Aceh.

Obstacles faced by the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency in socialising Child-Friendly Areas. However, these obstacles are not entirely an obstacle to socialising in Child-Friendly Districts. Even after targeting Child-Friendly Districts in West Aceh Regency, child-friendly schools, child-friendly Islamic boarding schools, child-friendly mosques, child-friendly health centres, child-friendly offices, and also child-friendly and suitable playgrounds will be established to create children with the best quality (Maulana & Leksono, 2023).

The government is trying to realize West Aceh as a child-friendly and livable district together with the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency by disseminating the socialization of Child-Friendly Cities so that the entire community can know and support the realization of Child-Friendly Regulation in West Aceh, as seen in Figure 2 below regarding child-friendly infrastructure in West Aceh Regency.

As seen in Picture 1, which is one of the efforts of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency to realise a Child-Friendly City in West Aceh Regency, namely by creating a Child-Friendly Park in the centre of Meulaboh City. During the Child-Friendly City socialization program that has been implemented, the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency should be able to measure the extent of public knowledge and participation in Child-Friendly City programs that are directly socialized by the Regional Secretary, Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service Ministry of the results can be used as an evaluation when the program is not running optimally in the public's perception.



Picture 1: Child-Friendly Infrastructure in West Aceh Regency

Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service (DP3AKB) West Aceh Regency (2024) [source]

Role as a Communication Tool

The policy can be implemented if it has been known and understood by the community in West Aceh, then the program must first be socialised or introduced to the community or target audience of the child-friendly city program. Socialisation of the program can be done through communication. This is in accordance with one of the functions of communication, namely to inform and teach, invite, encourage, change attitudes and behaviour of the community or related agencies. In an organisation or institution, there are various forms of communication, because in an institution, there are several people who occupy a certain position and have their respective duties in realising the goals of the institution, and there is an exchange of information or messages (Eaves & Leathers, 2017).

Socialisation is one of the communication functions that plays an important role in a person's behavioural patterns and in a person's understanding of the message conveyed. Through the process of socialisation, a person will be colored by their way of thinking and habits. So, it can be said that socialisation is a process of a person learning about their surroundings, both the physical environment and the socio-cultural environment. Providing direction to the community, especially to children, to fulfil their rights to be protected from violence and discrimination by providing understanding through socialisation and holding discussions with the community is the initial stage in the process of establishing a Child-Friendly Area (Elizabeth & Hidayat, 2016).

The Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency has so far conducted socialisation, socialization is carried out starting from the community and to related parties by advocating for the government or members of the House of Representatives. The form of socialisation used can be direct, such as face-to-face with the community and indirect through media such as electronic media, print media and social media. Socialisation must have the right media selection, the right media selection will determine the success of spreading messages to the target audience. Choosing a communication medium must consider the characteristics of the content and purpose of the message to be conveyed, and the type of media owned by the audience.

Socialisation from the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency has formed several children's forums in two villages in West Aceh Regency, such as Cot Seumeureng Village and Kuta Padang Village. Socialisation about Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh Regency has not been optimal, because only two villages received the socialisation, while in West Aceh Regency, there are 322 villages, so there are still 320 villages that do not know about the Child-Friendly Areas policy.



Picture 2: Village Children's Forum (FAKAT) West Aceh
FAKAT West Aceh (2024) [source]

Cross-sector communication carried out by Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency is very important in the process of socializing this decent city program, for example, cooperation with the Education Office, the office can help Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency in realizing a Child-Friendly City in West Aceh, such as which schools will be prioritized as child-friendly schools, then the education office will foster these schools to become child-friendly schools in West Aceh Regency, as seen in Figure 4 below.



Picture 3: Socialisation of Child-Friendly Districts (KLA) in Schools
Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service (DP3AKB) West Aceh Regency (2024) [source]

The Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service (DP3AKB) of West Aceh Regency has communicated the plans that will be carried out by the service by introducing Child-Friendly Cities to the public. However, currently it is still less than optimal because there are not many media, both electronic media, social media, and mass media, that contain news about the Child-Friendly Areas policy that will be implemented, causing many people to not fully know about Child-Friendly Cities. So that it can raise questions from some people about what will be made

from the Child-Friendly Areas, so that the planning that the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service plans is only temporary because the news has disappeared before the realisation of the Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh.

However, the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency is considered less effective because until now social media or billboards related to the socialization of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service policies are no longer available, even though in a program implementation, communication is needed to disseminate comprehensive information that is easy for the public to understand. Communication must be carried out intensively in order to create emotional closeness, be able to attract the attention and sympathy of the public, and create an understanding of what is conveyed to the public.

The government and all stakeholders, including the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service, have the power to help form a child-friendly village program policy. In forming this Child-Friendly Areas program policy, the government, assisted by the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service, involves many stakeholders in each stage so that it can run properly and as desired by children. The form that is carried out is by providing direction to the community, especially given to children to fulfil their rights to be protected from violence and discrimination, by providing understanding through socialisation and holding discussions with the community is the initial stage in the process of forming a Child-Friendly Area.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study sourced from data or interviews, it can be concluded that the role of the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service in the implementation of Child-Friendly Areas in West Aceh Regency has not been optimally implemented. This can be seen from the theory of Biddle and Thomas, with the indicator of the role as a policy has been running optimally, but the indicator of the role as a strategy and the role as a communication tool have not been running optimally. This is due to the lack of human resources, facilities, budget, communication between organisations and implementing activities. There is still a lack of socialisation and communication carried out by the Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Family Planning Service of West Aceh Regency, so that the community does not yet know about the status of a Child-Friendly Area for West Aceh.

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