

The Effectiveness of Regional Cash Social Assistance in Improving the Targeting Accuracy of Beneficiaries in Serang Regency

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of the Regional Cash Social Assistance program (Bantuan Sosial Tunai Daerah/BSTD) in improving the targeting accuracy of beneficiaries in Serang Regency, Banten Province. The poverty rate in Serang Regency as of March 2025 stood at 4.48 percent, with 68,510 people living below the poverty line of IDR 461,388 per capita per month. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 18 purposively selected informants, participant observation, and documentation analysis. Program effectiveness was measured using five indicators proposed by Edy Sutrisno (2010): program understanding, targeting accuracy, timeliness, goal achievement, and tangible change. The findings revealed that BSTD implementation had not reached an optimal level of effectiveness. Targeting accuracy and tangible change were assessed as the weakest dimensions. The primary obstacles identified were the transitional challenge of migrating from the former DTKS database to the new National Integrated Social and Economic Data system (DTSEN) under Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025, limited community participation in beneficiary verification, and weak inter-agency data coordination. The study recommended accelerating DTSEN operator training, revitalizing participatory village deliberation, and developing complementary economic empowerment programs

Keywords : *Cash social assistance, targeting accuracy, effectiveness, DTSEN, social protection, Serang Regency*



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INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a structural challenge in Indonesia's public governance. According to the latest data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of poor people in Indonesia as of March 2025 reached 23.85 million, or 8.47 percent of the total population, a decline of 0.56 percentage points from March 2024, which recorded 9.03 percent or 25.22 million poor people. This figure represents the lowest poverty rate in two decades (BPS, 2025). Despite this positive trend, the World Bank's Indonesia Economic Prospects (June 2025) notes that Indonesia's 5.0 percent economic growth in the first half of 2025 has not fully lifted the most vulnerable groups, as real wages declined 1.1 percent annually between 2018 and 2024, making effective and well-targeted social protection programs an indispensable policy priority (World Bank, 2025).

At the regional level, Serang Regency in Banten Province demonstrates a consistent downward trend in poverty. According to BPS Serang Regency data released in December 2025 and confirmed by BPS Head Tutty Amalia on 4 March 2026, the poverty rate as of March 2025 was 4.48 percent, a decrease of 0.03 percentage points from 4.51 percent in 2024. In absolute terms, 68,510 people lived below the poverty line of IDR 461,388 per capita per month, a reduction of 350 people from the previous year, out of a total population of 1,756,816 (BPS Serang Regency, 2025). Despite the declining headcount, Tutty cautioned that the poverty depth and severity indices warrant attention, as fluctuations within the four-to-five percent range over six years indicate that poverty reduction has yet to become structurally embedded.

The Regional Cash Social Assistance Program (Bantuan Sosial Tunai Daerah/BSTD) operated by the Serang Regency Government serves as a complement to national programs such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), funded from the regional budget and targeting poor and vulnerable households not yet reached by national programs. This is consistent with

Law Number 13 of 2011 on the Handling of the Destitute, which assigns responsibility to regional governments for delivering social protection within their jurisdictions. Since 5 February 2025, Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2025 has introduced the National Integrated Social and Economic Data (DTSEN), replacing the former Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) as the primary database for social assistance, integrating three previously separate databases into a single NIK-based master database updated every three months (Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025).

The problem of mistargeting in social assistance programs remains a serious and systemic issue. The Indonesian Ombudsman (2025) asserts that data problems are the primary cause of mistargeted social assistance, evidenced by the continued registration of deceased individuals, relocated residents who have not updated their records, and economically capable households still receiving benefits. Setiawan and Munawar (2025) further documented that inaccurate beneficiary data—compounded by infrequent updates, weak inter-agency coordination, and low public literacy regarding mandatory reporting—systematically undermines targeting accuracy. These patterns are highly relevant to the conditions observed in Serang Regency.

Edy Sutrisno (2010) in *Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia* proposes that the effectiveness of a program can be assessed through five indicators: program understanding, targeting accuracy, timeliness, goal achievement, and tangible change. Applying this framework, this study aims to analyze the extent to which the BSTD program in Serang Regency effectively improves beneficiary targeting accuracy, and to identify the factors inhibiting that effectiveness. The novelty of this research lies in applying Sutrisno's (2010) framework within the context of the ongoing DTKS-to-DTSEN data transition, enabling the study to respond to the most current dynamics in Indonesia's social protection policy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. As emphasized by Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach is most appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand the context, processes, and meanings underlying a complex social phenomenon. The research was conducted at the Social Affairs Office (Dinas Sosial) of Serang Regency as the agency technically responsible for the BSTD program, involving several sub-districts serving as distribution locations. Data collection was carried out throughout 2025, enabling field findings to be cross-referenced with the most recent poverty data released by BPS Serang Regency in December 2025.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 18 purposively selected informants, including the Head of the Social Protection Division of the Serang Regency Social Affairs Office, field officers, DTSEN operators at the village level, village heads and urban ward heads, as well as beneficiaries and non-beneficiary households. The inclusion of DTSEN operators was particularly important given that the policy transition under Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025 directly affects beneficiary data management. Secondary data were drawn from BPS Serang Regency publications (2025), Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025, Ombudsman RI reports, and relevant academic literature.

Data analysis employed the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), encompassing data condensation, data display, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking with key informants. Program effectiveness was measured using the five indicators of Edy Sutrisno (2010): (1) program understanding, (2) targeting accuracy, (3) timeliness, (4) goal achievement, and (5) tangible change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Current Poverty Profile of Serang Regency (2024–2025)

Before analyzing program effectiveness, it is essential to understand the most recent poverty context in Serang Regency. According to BPS Serang Regency (2025), the poverty rate as of March 2025 was 4.48 percent with 68,510 poor people, a reduction of 350 people from March 2024, which recorded 68,860 poor people or 4.51 percent out of a total population of 1,756,816. The Poverty Line stood at IDR 461,388 per capita per month, an increase of 2.69 percent from March 2024. Nationally, Indonesia's extreme poverty rate reached 0.85 percent or 2.38 million people in March 2025, a significant decline from 1.26 percent in March 2024 (BPS, 2025). Despite the positive headline trend, BPS Head Tutty Amalia cautioned that the poverty depth index (P1) and severity index (P2) must be

monitored closely, as the remaining poor are increasingly distant from the poverty line and require more intensive targeted intervention.

Program Understanding

Based on the first indicator of Edy Sutrisno (2010), program understanding refers to the extent to which all parties involved comprehend the program being carried out. Research findings indicated that understanding at the implementer level was reasonably good in technical terms. However, a new challenge emerged from the DTKS-to-DTSEN transition under Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025. Several village-level DTSEN operators reported that they did not yet fully understand the data updating mechanisms of the new system, including access authorization procedures requiring accounts at a minimum of echelon II-III official level. At the community level, understanding remained very limited. Most beneficiaries were only aware that they receive assistance, without understanding eligibility criteria, complaint mechanisms, or their right to propose or contest beneficiary nominations.

Targeting Accuracy

Targeting accuracy was the second and most critical indicator. Field findings confirmed that mistargeting in Serang Regency was systemic and exacerbated by the data migration from DTKS to DTSEN in 2025. Several villages experienced technical obstacles because the new DTSEN system required a ground-checking process by BPS and infrastructure adjustments that not all villages were prepared for. As a result, many BSTD beneficiary designations still referenced old DTKS data, which was prone to both inclusion and exclusion errors.

This finding aligned with the results of Setiawan and Munawar (2025), who found that social assistance distribution based on DTKS in Semarang City continued to encounter data inaccuracy problems, including registration of deceased individuals, residents who had relocated without updating their records, and financially capable individuals still receiving assistance. The Indonesian Ombudsman (2025) also recommended strengthening DTSEN integration with active involvement of neighborhood officials and communities in data verification as a structural solution to the recurring mistargeting problem.

Timeliness

In terms of timeliness—the third indicator—the BSTD program demonstrated comparatively better performance. The bank account-based distribution mechanism governed by Presidential Regulation Number 63 of 2017 enabled transfers to be made on a scheduled basis. However, during the early transition period in 2025, a number of beneficiaries experienced delays due to inactive bank accounts or mismatches between NIK data in the old DTKS system and the new DTSEN. This was a transitional challenge of a temporary nature but had a tangible impact on distribution timeliness (Indonesian Ombudsman, 2025).

Goal Achievement

The fourth indicator, goal achievement, assessed whether the primary objective of BSTD had been fulfilled. BPS data showed the poverty rate in Serang Regency declined from 4.85 percent (2023) to 4.51 percent (2024) and 4.48 percent (2025), indicating the contribution of various social protection programs to a gradual poverty reduction (BPS Serang Regency, 2025). However, as Edy Sutrisno (2010) emphasizes, effectiveness cannot be measured by quantitative output alone. As long as targeting accuracy was not guaranteed, the substantive goal of protecting those most in need could not be said to have been fully achieved. The increase in the Poverty Depth Index reported by BPS Head Tutty Amalia further indicated that the economic condition of the remaining poor was increasingly distant from the poverty line.

Tangible Change

Tangible change—the fifth indicator—measured whether the program produced a measurable and directly felt impact on beneficiaries. Most beneficiaries interviewed stated that BSTD assistance helped reduce expenditure on basic necessities, particularly food and children's education. However, improvements in medium-term economic conditions were not yet significantly apparent, as the value of assistance was consumptive in nature and not accompanied by sustained economic empowerment

programs. This finding was consistent with the conclusions of Noerkaisar (2021), who found that social assistance programs in Indonesia were generally ineffective in producing tangible change due to the absence of clear graduation strategies. The decile-based ranking system in DTSEN opens opportunities for more precise targeting, but its implementation in Serang Regency was still in the transitional phase.

Table 1. Effectiveness Assessment of the BSTD Program in Serang Regency Based on Edy Sutrisno's (2010) Indicators with 2025 Data

N o.	Indicator (Edy Sutrisno, 2010)	Field Findings & Supporting Data 2025	Assessment
1	Program Understanding	Implementers had sufficient technical understanding, but village-level DTSEN operators faced challenges adapting to the new system (Presidential Instruction No. 4/2025). Community/beneficiary understanding was limited to receiving assistance, not the program mechanism.	Moderately Effective
2	Targeting Accuracy	Inclusion and exclusion errors persisted as old DTKS data had not been fully migrated to DTSEN. Ombudsman RI (2025) confirmed data problems as the primary national cause of social assistance mistargeting.	Ineffective
3	Timeliness	Bank-based distribution operated on schedule (Presidential Regulation No. 63/2017), but the 2025 DTSEN transition caused delays for beneficiaries whose NIK data was not yet synchronized with the Civil Registry (Ombudsman RI, 2025).	Moderately Effective
4	Goal Achievement	Serang Regency poverty fell from 4.51% (2024) to 4.48% (March 2025), with 68,510 poor people (BPS Serang Regency, 2025). However, the rising Poverty Depth Index indicated that substantive goals were not yet optimally achieved.	Moderately Effective
5	Tangible Change	Beneficiaries reported the assistance alleviated basic expenditure, but no significant medium-term economic improvement was observed. The program was consumptive without a graduation strategy (Noerkaisar, 2021). DTSEN decile system was still in transition.	Ineffective

Source: Compiled from Field Research (2025) and BPS Serang Regency Data (2025)

Table 1 summarizes the effectiveness assessment based on Sutrisno's (2010) five indicators with the most current 2025 data. Two indicators—targeting accuracy and tangible change—were assessed as ineffective, while the remaining three were only moderately effective. No indicator reached full effectiveness. This confirmed that the BSTD program faced structural challenges made more complex by the national data system transition from DTKS to DTSEN. Edy Sutrisno (2010) asserts that a program can only be considered truly effective when all five indicators are simultaneously fulfilled. Comprehensive improvements in targeting accuracy and tangible change therefore constitute a priority that cannot be deferred.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion using the five effectiveness indicators of Edy Sutrisno (2010), it was concluded that the Regional Cash Social Assistance (BSTD) program in Serang Regency had not achieved an optimal level of effectiveness in improving beneficiary targeting accuracy. The most recent BPS data indicated that the poverty rate was 4.48 percent as of March 2025, with 68,510 people still living below the poverty line (BPS Serang Regency, 2025), while an increasing Poverty Depth Index indicated that the remaining poor were increasingly difficult to reach. Two of the

five effectiveness indicators—targeting accuracy and tangible change—were in the ineffective category, while the remaining three were only moderately effective.

The primary factors inhibiting program effectiveness were: first, the challenge of transitioning from DTKS to DTSEN under Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025, causing data discrepancies at the village level during early implementation; second, low community participation in beneficiary verification through village deliberation; and third, weak inter-agency coordination in NIK data synchronization between the Social Affairs Office, the Civil Registry Office, and DTSEN operators. This study recommends three policy steps: accelerating DTSEN operator training at the village level; strengthening participatory RT/RW-based verification mechanisms as recommended by the Indonesian Ombudsman (2025); and developing complementary economic empowerment programs to generate sustained improvements in beneficiary welfare. Future research is recommended to measure the long-term impact of the BSTD program using a mixed-methods approach

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