

## ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY CAPACITY FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN PROTECTION: A STUDY OF SOUTHWEST PAPUA, INDONESIA

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze policy capacity in the implementation of women and children's protection programs in Southwest Papua Province. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The theory used is the Policy Capacity Framework by Xun Wu, Howlett, and Ramesh (2017), which covers three dimensions: analytical capacity, operational capacity, and political capacity. The results show that support for program implementation is in place, but its effectiveness remains limited. In terms of analytical capacity, the utilization of the SIMFONI-PPPA system and SAPA 129 services has shown progress, but is still hampered by limited infrastructure, human resources, and the absence of a technical institution such as the UPTD-PPA. Data collection and analysis processes are still manual, thus not supporting evidence-based policymaking. In terms of operational capacity, the implementation of service SOPs, outreach, training, and the provision of safe houses has been ongoing, but is still partial and not institutionally coordinated. Meanwhile, in terms of political capacity, there is government commitment and community support, but protection policies have not been a top priority due to the lack of Regional Regulations (Perda) and strong institutional legitimacy. This study recommends strengthening policy capacity through integrated data systems, establishing a UPTD-PPA (Regional Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Unit), improving cross-sectoral coordination, adding professional staff and supporting facilities, and ratifying the Regional Regulation on the Protection of Women and Children. These efforts are expected to strengthen the effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the PPA program in Southwest Papua Province.

**Keywords:** Policy Capacity, Analytical, Operational, Political, Policy Analysis

### Introduction

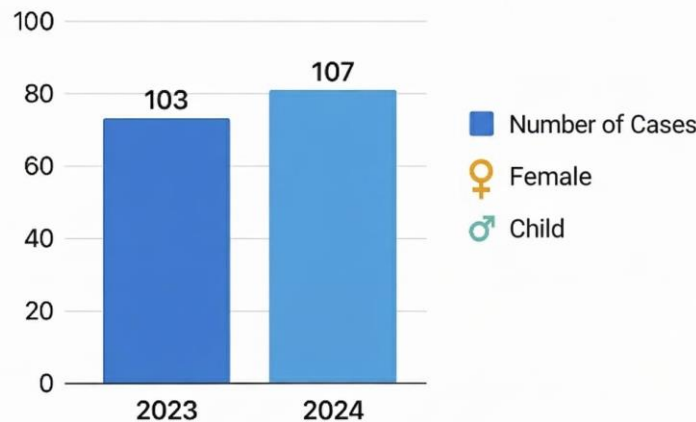
#### 1. Background:

Protection of women and children is a central issue in equitable and sustainable social development. Global commitment to this issue is reflected in various international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). Indonesia, as a state party to both conventions, has adopted the principles of gender protection and equality into national policy through Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. However, in practice, these policies still face serious challenges at the regional level, including weak institutional capacity, limited inter-agency coordination, and limited human and financial resources for effective implementation (Amin, 2025).

Southwest Papua Province presents a unique context for the implementation of policies to protect women and children. As a newly established region with a still-developing institutional structure, Southwest Papua faces the challenge of building a bureaucratic system and policies that are inclusive of vulnerable groups. The diverse and customary-based socio-cultural conditions of its society often impact how protection norms and practices are implemented at the local level (Mardin et al., 2025). Furthermore, geographically dispersed areas and limited accessibility complicate cross-institutional coordination. Therefore, this study is crucial for examining how local organizations' policy capacity is developed in such a transitional and contextual situation.

Based on data on the number of violence against women and children recorded in Southwest Papua.

**Figure 1. Data on Violence Case Services for Women and Children in Southwest Papua Province from 2023 to 2024**



*Source: Department of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Empowerment of Southwest Papua Province, 2025*

The data shows that the number of violence cases served by Southwest Papua Province has increased. In 2023, there were 103 cases of violence served in Southwest Papua, with an increase in service cases in 2024 of 107 cases. This increase in the number of cases certainly requires special attention in Southwest Papua to immediately find solutions and handle them.

Many studies have been conducted on women's protection in Indonesia, for example by Putra (2024), who highlighted the increasing number of gender-based violence cases and limited services in the regions. However, these studies generally emphasize legal, social, or cultural aspects, while the dimension of organizational policy capacity namely, the ability of institutions to design, implement, and evaluate public policies is rarely discussed in depth. In the public policy literature, the concept of organizational policy capacity refers to an institution's ability to mobilize resources, manage knowledge, and coordinate among policy actors (Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett, 2015; Lodge & Wegrich, 2012). Therefore, this study fills an important gap in the literature by integrating analysis of policy capacity and the local sociocultural context in Southwest Papua.

This article aims to analyze the policy capacity of organizations in protecting women and children in Southwest Papua. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research explores how policy actors at the provincial and district/city levels interact to shape and implement policies that adapt to the social realities of the community. This approach is expected to uncover the internal dynamics of organizations, including the structural and cultural factors that influence policy capacity in the region. This article is significant because it provides an empirical contribution to efforts to strengthen social protection governance in the regions, particularly in areas with complex socio-political conditions such as Southwest Papua. Theoretically, the results of this study expand the application of the policy capacity framework in the context of women's and children's protection in developing countries, which has been dominated by studies from Western contexts (Painter & Pierre, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2016). Practically, the findings of this study can form the basis for recommendations for local governments, non-governmental organizations, and development partners to strengthen institutional design, cross-sectoral coordination, and policy implementation strategies that are more responsive to the needs of women and children. Thus, this article contributes to the development of a more inclusive, contextual, and equitable social protection model in eastern Indonesia.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of an in-depth understanding of the capacity of organizational policies to protect women and children in Southwest Papua. Using a qualitative approach, this research seeks to explore how organizational policies and practices are implemented within the region's unique social, cultural, and institutional context. Case studies are used as a research strategy to focus the analysis on real-life and complex situations that illustrate the phenomenon of women and children protection policies at the local level.

Research data was collected through two main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and a documentation study. Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, such as local government officials, managers of women and children protection institutions, community leaders, and representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in this issue (Astuti, 2014). These techniques aimed to gain perspectives and firsthand experiences regarding policy implementation and the challenges faced in the field. Additionally, a documentation study was conducted using various written sources such as local regulations, institutional reports, statistical data, and official publications related to women and children protection. The combination of these two techniques is expected to produce rich, comprehensive, and complementary data.

Data analysis techniques were carried out by following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data reduction is carried out to sort out relevant information, while data presentation aims to systematically compile research findings. Conclusions are obtained based on patterns that emerge from the results of the analysis of policy capacity in Southwest Papua (Cresswell, 2018).

In addition, data triangulation was carried out to increase the validity of research findings. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were compared to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the research results.

## Results

### **Policy Capacity in the Context of Women and Children Protection in Southwest Papua**

The research findings indicate that policy capacity in Southwest Papua still faces significant challenges, primarily due to the strong social and cultural characteristics influenced by a patriarchal system. In this context, the issue of protecting women and children is not only an institutional issue but also a cultural one, where traditional norms and social structures often influence how society views violence and gender inequality. As a public organization, the local government needs to have adequate policy capacity to respond to these issues systematically, data-driven, and with a focus on social justice.

Local policy capacity can be understood as the ability of government organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate effective public policies (Foroutani et al., 2024). In the case of Southwest Papua, this capacity has not yet been fully developed because the region has recently undergone regional expansion, and is still in the stages of institutional formation and bureaucratic restructuring. This situation directly impacts the effectiveness of women and children protection programs, which require cross-sectoral coordination and the support of competent human resources.

Policy capacity not merely an administrative capability, but also an adaptive ability to navigate complex social contexts. At the epistemic level, policy capacity encompasses the government's ability to define problems accurately and evidence-based (Howlett & Capano, 2021). In a deeply patriarchal context, sensemaking is key the ability to critically read social dynamics, distinguish between visible data and hidden cases, and understand multiple vulnerabilities (e.g., women and children, those with disabilities, or those with low economic status). Without this sensitivity,

policymaking easily falls into technocratic patterns: creating programs without truly addressing the structural roots of the problem.

At the organizational level, policy capacity demands an integrated protection system. Southwest Papua still faces significant limitations in infrastructure and human resources: there is only one safe house, a reporting system that is not standardized, and the implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) is still partial. The absence of a Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) means that coordination of case handling is centered on the head of the agency, creating a bottleneck in the policy flow and slowing field response. On the other hand, the presence of facilitators, safe house managers, and children's forums demonstrates the social potential that can be strengthened to bolster the operational capacity of the local government.

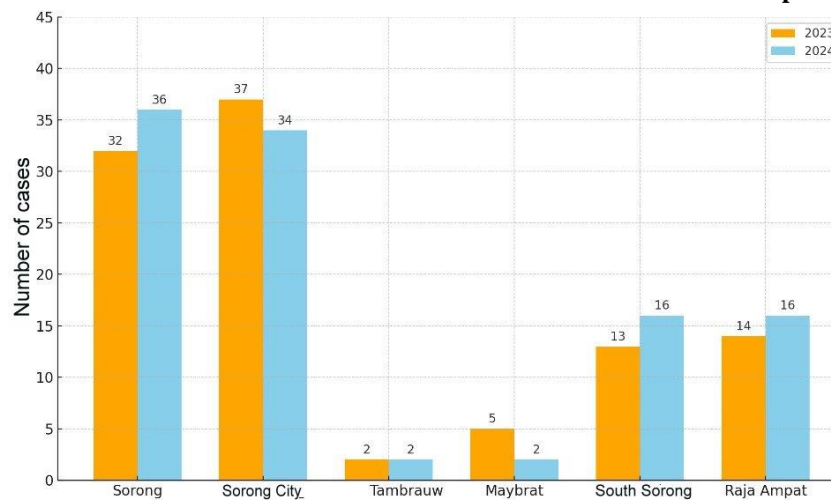
And the systemic level, policy capacity depends on commitment, leadership, and networks. As a new province, Southwest Papua is developing its priorities and institutional structure. Strong political commitment is needed to ensure that the protection of women and children becomes a strategic agenda, not merely a ceremonial activity. The establishment of Technical Implementation Units (UPTD), sustainable budget allocation, and the involvement of non-governmental actors (civil society organizations, religious institutions, and traditional leaders) are crucial steps to strengthen the policy ecosystem.

#### **Analytical Capacity: Data Management and Policy Evaluation**

Analytical capacity is a fundamental dimension in developing effective, evidence-based public policies. In the context of women's and children's protection in Southwest Papua, this capacity reflects the extent to which local governments are able to systematically collect, process, interpret, and utilize data to design policies responsive to needs on the ground. James (2025) explain that good analysis depends not only on the availability of data but also on the interpretive ability of officials to understand the meaning behind the numbers. Thus, analytical capacity is not merely a technical activity, but rather an epistemic process that determines the direction of policy: whether it will be reactive and fragmented, or proactive and sustainable.

Data management for women's and children's protection in Southwest Papua still faces a number of significant limitations. Although national systems such as the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (Simfoni PPA) have been implemented, their implementation at the regional level has not been consistent. One reason is the limited human resources competent in data management, case analysis, and information technology-based reporting. Many officials are not trained in the use of digital systems, so the data input process is often irregular and unstandardized. As a result, the available data does not fully reflect the actual situation on the ground. In a policy context, this poses a serious challenge because decisions taken may not reflect the real conditions of the community.

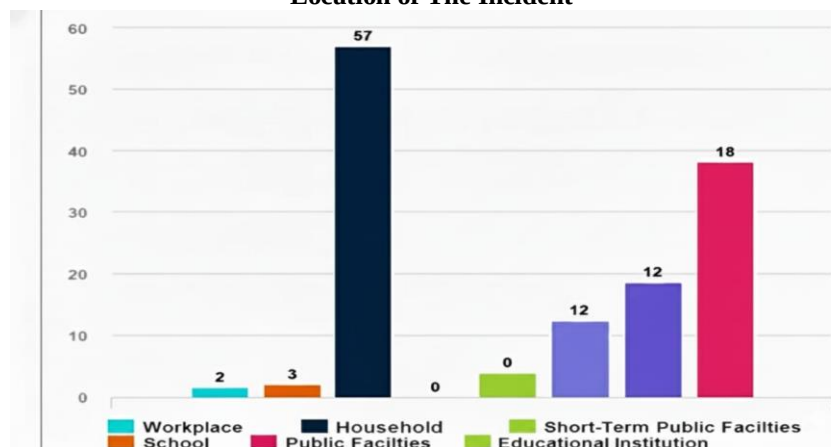
**Figure 2. The Number of Victims of Sexual Violence Cases in Southwest Papua Province**



Source : Department of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Empowerment of Southwest Papua Province, 2025

In 2023, the total number of recorded cases of violence across all regions reached significant levels, with the highest distribution of cases in Sorong City (37 cases) and Sorong Regency (32 cases). Meanwhile, the lowest cases occurred in Tambrauw Regency (2 cases) and Maybrat Regency (5 cases). Entering 2024, the number of cases in several regions experienced relatively small changes but remained at alarming levels. The regencies/cities with the highest numbers were still dominated by Sorong Regency (36 cases) and Sorong City (34 cases), confirming that urban areas have a greater concentration of social vulnerability than rural areas.

**Figure 3. The Number of Victims of Sexual Violence Cases In Southwest Papua Province Based on The Location of The Incident**



Source : Department of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Empowerment of Southwest Papua Province, 2025

Based on the shows that cases of violence against women and children in Southwest Papua Province mostly occur in the domestic sphere, with a total of 57 victims. The high rate of domestic violence indicates that the private sphere is the most unsafe space for women and children in Southwest Papua. This phenomenon aligns with national trends, where domestic violence remains the most prevalent form of violence, particularly against women. This situation indicates that victim

protection efforts remain weak at the grassroots level, particularly in reporting, initial response, and victim support. This is where the government's role lies, providing support and implementing victim protection programs. Analytical skills and policy support are essential for resolving these cases.

This situation indicates the need to improve the analytical capacity of regional officials, particularly in interpreting data and formulating evidence-based policies (Sayogo et al., 2025). Furthermore, the lack of supporting infrastructure such as only one safe house in the entire province limits the government's ability to provide a swift and appropriate response to victims. Therefore, strengthening data collection and analysis systems is crucial to ensuring that policies for protecting women and children are implemented effectively and sustainably.

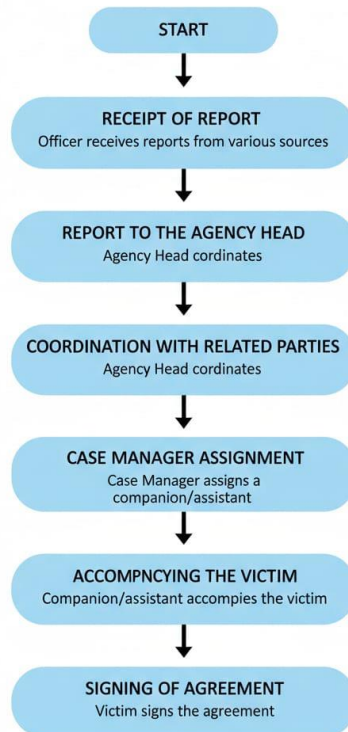
Analytical capacity challenges also stem from weak inter-institutional coordination. Information on cases of violence against women and children is often scattered across various agencies, from social services and the police to health institutions and community organizations. However, there is no effective mechanism to integrate this data into a single, unified information system. This results in duplication, data gaps, and even discrepancies in reporting between agencies. Cross-sectoral data integration is crucial for understanding patterns of violence, risk factors, and the effectiveness of implemented policy interventions. Without a coordinated data system, regional policies tend to be ad-hoc and not based on longitudinal analysis that can map trends and social changes over time. Analytical capacity is also related to the policy evaluation process. In Southwest Papua, evaluation of women's and children's protection programs remains administrative, limited to reporting activities rather than measuring outcomes and impacts. Rutten & Knill (2022) describe that a good evaluation should serve as a tool for institutional reflection: identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for policy improvement. For strengthening analytical capacity in a bureaucratic culture that still tends to emphasize formal reporting aspects over substantive analysis. Officials often focus on completing administrative reports rather than interpreting the resulting data. This shows that analytical capacity cannot be separated from institutional and political dimensions. Leadership is needed that encourages a knowledge-based work culture (knowledge-based governance), where data and analytical results are not merely documents but serve as the basis for measurable and accountable decision-making. Building such a culture requires ongoing training, technical assistance, and a reward system for officials who demonstrate strong analytical skills.

### **Operational Capacity: SOP Implementation and Field Challenges**

Operational capacity is a dimension that determines the extent to which policies can be effectively implemented in the field. While analytical capacity focuses on the ability to understand and formulate data-based policies, operational capacity emphasizes an institution's ability to implement those policies through a clear organizational structure, human resources, procedures, and work mechanisms. In the context of protecting women and children in Southwest Papua, operational capacity serves as a bridge between policy formulation and the social realities faced by the community. Without strong operational capacity, policies tend to stop at the administrative level, unable to reach victims, let alone provide sustainable recovery.

The Southwest Papua Government has standard operating procedures (SOPs) for handling cases of violence against women and children. These SOPs regulate the service flow, from receiving reports and assisting victims to referrals to safe houses and legal services.

**Figure 4. SOP Flow for Complaints of Sexual Violence in Southwest Papua**



Source : Department of Social Affairs and Women and Children's Empowerment of Southwest Papua Province, 2025

However, the implementation of these SOPs in the field has not been optimal due to the lack of a Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) specifically coordinating the implementation of these policies. As a result, operational responsibility remains centralized in the hands of the Head of the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, leading to overlapping roles and slow response times. This situation is exacerbated by the limited number of professional advocates and the limited service infrastructure at the district and city levels.

Many officers and advocates in the field lack adequate training in case management approaches, trauma management, and gender perspectives in victim services. Yet, the quality of interactions between officers and victims is crucial to the effectiveness of services. In some cases, this limited understanding can even lead to secondary victimization where victims experience further stress due to insensitive treatment by those handling them. Therefore, strengthening human resource capacity is a top priority so that the protection system operates not only administratively but also humanely and empathetically. Limited facilities and infrastructure are also a major obstacle to strengthening operational capacity. To date, in Southwest Papua, there is only one safe house that serves as a temporary shelter for victims of violence. The vast geographical conditions and limited transportation access make service coverage uneven, especially for victims living in remote areas. As a result, many victims struggle to receive immediate assistance, both in the form of physical protection and psychosocial support. This situation highlights the need for a decentralized strategy for protection services through the establishment of community-based service units, which can serve as a starting point for rapid response before further action is taken by the provincial government.

The key actors in bridging policy with the real needs of the community are Children's Forums, field facilitators, and safe house managers. Collaboration between the government, social institutions, and traditional leaders has also begun to develop as a form of adaptation to local socio-cultural conditions. This community-based approach has proven more effective in a society that still strongly upholds local values and strong social ties. If managed well, community participation can be a social force that complements the lack of formal institutional capacity.

### **Political Capacity: Commitment and Actors' Collaboration**

A key element within the overall policy capacity framework is political capacity. This dimension determines the extent to which policies can gain legitimacy, support, and sustainability at the government level. In the context of protecting women and children, political capacity relates not only to formal support from regional leaders but also includes the government's ability to build coalitions, forge partnerships, and create inclusive deliberative spaces for all involved actors. Without strong political capacity, policies have the potential to lose direction, become deprioritized, or even stagnate at the symbolic level without any real change on the ground (Wu, Ramesh & Howlett, 2015).

To examine the cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration aspects of political capacity for the protection of women and children in Southwest Papua, findings from several parties indicate that cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration in the implementation of women and children's protection programs in Southwest Papua have shown progress, although various limitations remain. The involvement of facilitators in the development of planning documents such as the Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) Strategic Plan (Renstra) and the annual Terms of Reference (TOR) demonstrates the potential for participation by non-governmental actors in the policy formulation process. This is a positive step toward participatory and inclusive governance, where input from parties directly involved in victim assistance can enhance the quality of the resulting policies. However, this form of participation remains consultative and has not yet been fully institutionalized, thus preventing the facilitators from assuming a strategic role in broader policy decision-making.

The involvement of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), community leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academics also demonstrates the existence of diverse cross-sectoral collaboration in championing the protection of women and children. Activities such as joint advocacy, CEDAW research, and the public review of the academic paper on the establishment of the UPTD-PPA (Regional Apparatus Empowerment and Child Protection Unit) demonstrate a collective awareness of the importance of strengthening evidence-based protection systems and public participation. However, this collaboration remains sporadic and dependent on specific opportunities, such as the development of regulations or collaborative project activities. This situation indicates that cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms have not been systematically institutionalized within local government structures. A more permanent collaborative framework is needed, for example through the establishment of a cross-agency coordination forum or integrated task force, to ensure more consistent and sustainable advocacy and program implementation.

Furthermore, the role of the Children's Forum in the context of political coordination and representation represents a crucial dimension in efforts to build an inclusive and child-centered protection system. The involvement of the Children's Forum in campaigns, outreach, and dialogue with the government demonstrates a concrete recognition of children's right to participate in public policy. However, limited budgetary support limits their scope to symbolic activities, hindering their ability to play a strategic role in policy planning and evaluation. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of the Children's Forum, along with providing financial and institutional support, requires serious attention so that their participation is not merely a formality but also has a substantive impact

on policies for the protection of women and children. Thus, cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration in Southwest Papua have great potential to develop into a solid system, provided they are supported by institutional legitimacy, adequate budget allocation, and consistent political commitment from all stakeholders.

The context of policy capacity theory, findings in Southwest Papua indicate that legitimacy and political commitment are crucial elements in supporting the effectiveness of policies for the protection of women and children. According to Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995), political capacity encompasses the ability of political actors and government institutions to build legitimacy, secure political support, and create institutional stability that allows policies to be implemented consistently. In this case, despite the presence of political will at the individual level, such as among officials at the Women and Children Protection Office and several female bureaucrats, the lack of formal legal instruments, such as the Regional Regulation (Perda) on the Protection of Women and Children and the Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD-PPA), indicates weak political capacity. This weakness results in existing policies lacking sufficient legal and institutional strength to regulate coordination, resource allocation, and program accountability mechanisms.

Furthermore, in relation to the perspective of Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock (2017) on the concept of problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA), political capacity is measured not only by the existence of formal regulations but also by the political system's ability to adapt, innovate, and build cross-sector coalitions in response to policy issues. In Southwest Papua, the collaboration between the government, NGOs, academics, and the Children's Forum reflects a gradual process of policy adaptation and learning, although it has not yet been institutionalized. This indicates that political capacity at the local level is transitioning toward a more collaborative approach. However, the lack of a formal mechanism to coordinate these various actors has the potential to hinder long-term policy consolidation. Thus, despite the presence of strong social and moral capital among communities and facilitators, weak political support at the structural level hinders the transformation of this collaboration into sustainable policy capacity.

From the perspective of policy capacity theory, according to Wu, Ramesh, and Howlett (2015), strong political capacity should create a conducive environment for organizational and technical capacity dimensions. Political capacity serves as a foundation that ensures stability, legitimacy, and resource support for the sustainability of public policies. In the context of Southwest Papua, weak political capacity is evident in the lack of integration of women's and children's protection policies into regional development priorities and the lack of budget commitment. As a result, curative policies still rely on personal initiative and support from non-governmental organizations. To strengthen policy capacity comprehensively, strategic steps are needed, including building political legitimacy through regional regulations, enhancing gender-sensitive political leadership, and strengthening cross-actor networks. If this dimension of political capacity can be strengthened, policies to protect women and children in Southwest Papua will not only be a response to cases of violence but will develop into a robust, measurable, and equitable social protection system.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research findings indicate that the policy capacity of the Southwest Papua regional government for the protection of women and children is still in the early stages of institutional strengthening. The three dimensions of analytical, operational, and political capacity are not yet fully balanced. The analytical capacity of the Social Services use of the SIMFONI-PPPA system and the SAPA 129 complaint service, implementation has not been optimal due to limited infrastructure, human resources, and institutional support. Case identification and analysis processes are still largely

manual, resulting in data often being unintegrated and difficult to use as a basis for evidence-based policy decisions. The absence of a technical institution such as the UPTD PPA at the provincial level also weakens coordination and the evaluative function of ongoing policies in Southwest Papua Province. The local government has an operational framework in the form of service SOPs and implements various programs such as violence prevention outreach, mentor training, and the provision of safe houses. However, implementation remains fragmented and does not fully meet established standards. Cross-sectoral coordination has been established through the PPPA Office, the Children's Forum, and NGOs, but this remains ad-hoc and relies on individual initiatives rather than structured institutional mechanisms. Budget limitations, lack of certified professionals, and supporting facilities such as operational vehicles also hamper the effectiveness of program implementation. Operational capacity to manage and allocate resources remains suboptimal, resulting in limited curative and reintegrative services for victims of violence.

Despite political capacity, commitment and attention from local governments, and moral support from communities, religious leaders, and non-governmental organizations, protection policies have not yet become a top priority in the regional development agenda. The absence of formal regulations such as the Regional Regulation (Perda) on the Protection of Women and Children and the lack of the establishment of the UPTD-PPA (Principal Implementation Unit) demonstrate the weak institutional legitimacy underlying program implementation. This situation leaves policy implementation dependent on individual initiatives and informal cross-sectoral collaboration that has not been systematically institutionalized. On the other hand, preventive initiatives such as the establishment of the Regional Child Forum and Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Villages/Villages (DRPPA) demonstrate the political will at the bureaucratic level that is beginning to move toward an inclusive and participatory protection system in Southwest Papua.

As a recommendation from this article, the Government of Southwest Papua needs to develop an integrated information system and database, which must be accompanied by the establishment of a Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for Women and Children Protection as a technical institution with a coordinating and evaluative mandate for all protection programs. The regional government also needs to strengthen institutional and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms between the PPPA Office, NGOs, the Children's Forum, academics, and law enforcement agencies so that program implementation can be structured and sustainable. Furthermore, the development and refinement of comprehensive service SOPs, including the SOP for Social Reintegration and the SOP for Safe Houses, is crucial so that each case can be handled consistently, quickly, and in accordance with minimum service standards. To support political capacity, the Provincial Government of Southwest Papua needs to strengthen institutional legitimacy and formal political support through the development and ratification of a Regional Regulation (Perda) on the Protection of Women and Children and the acceleration of the establishment of the UPTD-PPA. Furthermore, the integration of protection programs into the regional development planning and priority documents (RPJMD) is necessary so that this policy has a strong legal basis and resource allocation to support policy sustainability.

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