

Legal Development and Human Rights in the Governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program: A Good Governance Perspective

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Abstract

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Legal development plays a fundamental role in ensuring that constitutional rights are effectively realized through public governance. This study examines Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program by addressing the theoretical relationship between legal development, human rights, and governance quality in fulfilling the constitutional rights to adequate food, health, and social welfare. The study aims to analyze the normative legal framework governing the MBG program and to develop a governance model that strengthens constitutional rights through legal development, human rights principles, good governance, and public accountability. A normative legal research design with conceptual and socio-legal orientations is employed using statutory, conceptual, and case approaches. The analysis draws upon constitutional provisions, legislation, international human rights instruments, legal doctrines, and scholarly literature to evaluate the coherence between legal norms and governance practices. The findings indicate that Indonesia has established a robust legal foundation for the MBG program; however, regulatory fragmentation, institutional coordination, food safety supervision, transparency, and accountability continue to limit effective implementation. The study proposes an integrated governance model emphasizing regulatory harmonization, institutional strengthening, digital governance, collaborative oversight, performance-based auditing, public participation, and human rights-oriented evaluation. The article contributes to legal theory by demonstrating that legal development extends beyond regulatory formulation and depends upon institutional capacity and governance quality. It also advances socio-legal scholarship by explaining how law functions simultaneously as a normative framework and a social institution that enables the effective realization of constitutional rights and sustainable public welfare.

Keywords

Legal Development; Human Rights; Good Governance

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INTRODUCTION

Legal development serves as a central instrument for achieving constitutional objectives and ensuring that public governance advances justice, social welfare, and the protection of fundamental rights. Contemporary legal scholarship increasingly recognizes that legislation

alone cannot guarantee effective rights protection.¹ Legal institutions, administrative arrangements, and governance mechanisms determine whether constitutional commitments are translated into practical outcomes. This relationship has stimulated extensive socio-legal discussions concerning the capacity of legal systems to transform normative guarantees into measurable public benefits, particularly where state intervention addresses social welfare and economic rights.

Human rights scholarship similarly emphasizes that the right to adequate food constitutes a fundamental component of human dignity and sustainable development. International human rights instruments, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), establish state obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill access to adequate nutrition.² Indonesia has incorporated these commitments through constitutional provisions and national legislation recognizing economic, social, and cultural rights. Despite this normative framework, unequal nutritional access, persistent stunting, food insecurity, and regional disparities continue to demonstrate that constitutional guarantees have not yet generated equal protection for all citizens.³

The Free Nutritious Meals Program represents one of Indonesia's most ambitious national welfare initiatives. The program seeks to improve nutritional quality, strengthen human capital, reduce childhood malnutrition, and support the national vision of Indonesia Emas 2045. Public policy literature generally characterizes Free Nutritious Meals as an investment in human development, while legal scholars identify the program as an expression of constitutional responsibility for fulfilling social rights.⁴ Effective implementation, however, depends not only on policy objectives but also on legal certainty, institutional coordination, administrative accountability, transparency, and public participation.

Governance theory provides an important analytical foundation for evaluating large-scale welfare programs. Good governance principles require accountability, transparency, legal certainty, effectiveness, participation, and institutional integrity throughout policy implementation. These principles become particularly significant when public programs involve substantial state expenditure and directly affect constitutionally protected rights.⁵ Reports

¹ Jorge Freddy Milian Gómez, "The Legal Architecture of the Right to Food: Normative Foundations and Differentiated Functions of Its Four-Fold Interpretation," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 30, no. 4 (2026): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2026.2664628>.

² Jorge Freddy Milian Gómez, "A Normative Theory of Food Systems: Philosophical Principles, Legal Foundations and Structural Reorientation of the Right to Food," *Food Ethics* 11, no. 1 (2026): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41055-026-00213-4>.

³ Emily M Broad Leib and Kipper Berven, "Food Law and Policy: An Initial Assessment of an Emerging Academic Field," *Food Security*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-026-01650-z>.

⁴ Azadeh Chalabi, "The Right to Development as a Human Right to an Enabling Environment for Collective Well-Being," *Journal of Human Rights* 25, no. 2 (2026): 253–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2026.2636291>.

⁵ Hariang Dede Taufik, Bambang Slamet Riyadi, and Riza Zulfikar, "Constitutional Legitimacy and Legal Policy of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Indonesia," *International Journal of Law, Policy and Social Review* 8, no. 2 (2026): 173–81.

concerning administrative fragmentation, uneven food distribution, weak monitoring systems, food safety incidents, and inconsistent regional implementation indicate that governance quality remains a determining factor influencing program performance and public trust.

Socio-legal scholarship argues that legal effectiveness cannot be measured solely through statutory compliance. Legal norms achieve legitimacy when institutions consistently deliver fair, accountable, and rights-oriented public services. Administrative law further reinforces this proposition through the General Principles of Good Governance, which require legality, proportionality, openness, accuracy, and accountability throughout governmental decision-making.⁶ These principles establish standards for evaluating whether welfare programs genuinely fulfill constitutional obligations rather than merely satisfy formal regulatory requirements.

Existing scholarship has examined the free nutritious meals program through several disciplinary approaches, including public health, nutrition policy, public administration, fiscal governance, state responsibility, and policy effectiveness. These studies contribute valuable empirical findings regarding implementation and policy outcomes. Nevertheless, limited attention has been devoted to integrating legal development theory, human rights obligations, and socio-legal governance analysis into a unified analytical framework.⁷ Existing literature rarely explains how legal development strengthens governance structures that enable constitutional rights to be realized through national welfare programs.

This limitation reveals an important theoretical gap. Current studies generally evaluate administrative performance or policy outcomes without examining the reciprocal relationship among legal development, governance quality, and human rights fulfillment. Consequently, insufficient scholarly attention has been given to the manner in which legal institutions shape governance capacity and how governance failures may undermine constitutional guarantees despite comprehensive legal regulation.⁸ Addressing this gap contributes to broader debates concerning the relationship between law, state institutions, and social welfare.

This article addresses the following research questions: (1) How do legal development and human rights principles regulate the governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program as a mechanism for fulfilling constitutional rights to adequate food and social welfare? (2) What governance model can strengthen the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program through legal development, human rights protection, good governance, and accountability principles?

The article offers three principal contributions. First, it develops an integrated analytical framework linking legal development theory, human rights obligations, and good governance

⁶ Jesse B Bump, "Undernutrition, Obesity and Governance: A Unified Framework for Upholding the Right to Food," *BMJ Global Health* 3, no. Suppl 4 (2018): e000886, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2018-000886>.

⁷ Katie Morris, "A Forgotten Element of the Right to Adequate Food: Redressing the Normative Gap Regarding Consumer Acceptability," *Human Rights Law Review* 25, no. 3 (2025): ngaf020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngaf020>.

⁸ Jody Harris and Ellen Johnson, "The Right to Adequate Food in UN Systems: Human Rights Mechanisms in Practice," *World Nutrition* 16, no. 1 (2025): 97–105, <https://doi.org/10.26596/wn.202516197-105>.

principles for evaluating national welfare programs. Second, it provides a theoretical critique of governance arrangements that separate administrative performance from constitutional rights protection. Third, it proposes a rights-oriented governance model that reinforces legal certainty, institutional accountability, transparency, and participatory governance as essential conditions for realizing constitutional guarantees through Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program.

METHODS

This study adopts normative legal research with a conceptual and theory-oriented design to examine the legal governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program.⁹ The inquiry is grounded in legal development theory, human rights theory, and good governance theory, which together provide the analytical framework for assessing whether the regulatory structure governing the Free Nutritious Meals program effectively supports the fulfillment of constitutional rights to adequate food and social welfare. A socio-legal orientation complements the doctrinal analysis by examining the interaction between legal norms, public institutions, and governance practices that influence the realization of constitutional guarantees.

The analytical strategy combines three complementary approaches.¹⁰ The statutory approach examines constitutional provisions, legislation, and implementing regulations governing food security, public administration, human rights, and the institutional organization of the Free Nutritious Meals program. The conceptual approach analyzes legal development theory, welfare state theory, human rights obligations, state responsibility, and good governance principles to construct an integrated analytical framework capable of explaining the relationship between legal norms and governance quality. The case approach evaluates governance issues arising during Free Nutritious Meals implementation, including institutional coordination, legal certainty, accountability, transparency, food safety, administrative supervision, and public participation. The combination of these approaches enables systematic examination of the consistency between constitutional obligations and governance practices.

The research relies on primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, Law Number 18 of 2012 on Food, Law Number 30 of 2014 on Government Administration, Law Number 11 of 2005 ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2024 concerning the National Nutrition Agency, and Presidential Regulation Number 115 of 2025 concerning the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals Program. Secondary legal materials consist of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, official government publications, and academic literature discussing legal development, constitutional rights, welfare governance, public administration, and state responsibility. Tertiary materials include legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other authoritative reference sources that support conceptual interpretation.

⁹ Teguh Arya Samudra Negara, "Normative Legal Research in Indonesia: Its Origins and Approaches," *Audito Comparative Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.22219/audito.v4i1.24855>.

¹⁰ Terry Hutchinson, "The Doctrinal Method: Incorporating Interdisciplinary Methods in Reforming the Law," *Erasmus Law Review* 9, no. 3 (2016): 130–45.

Data collection is conducted through library research, involving the systematic identification, selection, classification, and examination of legal and academic materials relevant to the research questions.¹¹ The research subjects are legal norms, constitutional principles, statutory regulations, legal doctrines, governance principles, and scholarly arguments concerning the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals program. These materials constitute the basis for evaluating the relationship between legal regulation and governance structures responsible for protecting constitutional rights.

Data analysis employs qualitative legal analysis using doctrinal reasoning, legal interpretation, conceptual synthesis, and normative argumentation. Constitutional, systematic, and teleological interpretation are applied to evaluate the coherence of the legal framework governing the free nutritious meals program. The analysis further compares normative expectations (*das sollen*) with governance realities (*das sein*) to identify regulatory inconsistencies, institutional weaknesses, and governance deficiencies affecting the realization of the right to adequate food. Rather than measuring empirical policy performance, the analysis focuses on explaining how legal development can strengthen governance arrangements that ensure accountability, transparency, legal certainty, institutional coordination, and effective human rights protection.

The scope of this study is limited to Indonesia's legal and institutional framework governing the free nutritious meals program. The analysis does not assess nutritional outcomes, economic efficiency, or quantitative indicators of policy implementation. Instead, the study develops a theoretical explanation of how legal development, human rights obligations, and good governance principles can be integrated into a coherent governance model for national welfare programs. This analytical approach directly addresses the theoretical gap identified in previous scholarship by linking legal development with governance quality as mutually reinforcing conditions for the effective realization of constitutional rights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Legal Development and Human Rights Instruments in the Governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program as the Fulfillment of Constitutional Rights to Food and Social Welfare

Legal development occupies a central position in the constitutional architecture of Indonesia because it provides the normative foundation through which the State pursues social justice, public welfare, and the protection of fundamental rights. Modern legal systems extend beyond legislative production and require institutional capacity capable of translating constitutional mandates into effective public policies.¹² National welfare programs therefore represent more than administrative initiatives; they embody legal commitments that transform

¹¹ Gómez, "A Normative Theory of Food Systems: Philosophical Principles, Legal Foundations and Structural Reorientation of the Right to Food."

¹² Boubacar Sidi Diallo and Alhousseini Diabaté, "The Right to Food in the Face of Land Commodification and Economic Globalisation in West Africa: The Case of Guinea," *Przegląd Prawa Rolnego* 37, no. 2 (2025): 181–99, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ppr.2025.37.2.9>.

constitutional guarantees into tangible public services. The Free Nutritious Meals Program illustrates this transformation by positioning access to adequate nutrition as a constitutional obligation rather than a discretionary government policy. Legal development consequently functions as an instrument that strengthens both public governance and the realization of human dignity.

The constitutional legitimacy of the free nutritious meals program derives directly from the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which establishes social welfare as one of the fundamental objectives of the Indonesian state. Article 28H guarantees every person the right to live in prosperity, enjoy health services, and obtain conditions supporting a dignified life.¹³ Article 34 further requires the State to protect disadvantaged communities, develop social security systems, and provide adequate public health services. These constitutional provisions establish a normative obligation requiring government institutions to ensure equitable access to nutritious food, particularly for vulnerable groups.¹⁴ Food security therefore constitutes an inseparable component of constitutional rights rather than a purely socioeconomic policy objective.

Human rights theory reinforces this constitutional obligation by recognizing adequate food as an indispensable element of human dignity and sustainable development. International human rights law imposes legal duties requiring States to respect, protect, and fulfill economic, social, and cultural rights without discrimination. Indonesia accepted these obligations through the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) under Law Number 11 of 2005.¹⁵ Ratification transformed international commitments into binding national legal obligations that require public authorities to establish governance systems capable of guaranteeing nutritional security for every citizen. State responsibility consequently extends beyond policy formulation and includes institutional arrangements ensuring effective implementation, equal access, and continuous protection of food-related rights.

National legislation further strengthens this legal framework through Law Number 18 of 2012 on Food, which requires government institutions to guarantee the availability, accessibility, safety, diversity, and nutritional quality of food. This statutory framework demonstrates that food governance represents an integrated legal responsibility linking agricultural policy, public health, social welfare, and constitutional protection. Legal development therefore requires coordinated institutional mechanisms capable of ensuring that statutory guarantees generate practical benefits for society.¹⁶ The free nutritious meals program reflects this integrated approach because it directly connects constitutional rights, statutory obligations, and

¹³ Jessica Fanzo et al., "The Food Systems Dashboard Is a New Tool to Inform Better Food Policy," *Nature Food* 1, no. 5 (2020): 243–46, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-020-0077-y>.

¹⁴ Corinna Hawkes, Barry M Popkin, and Boyd Swinburn, "Smart Food Policies for Obesity Prevention," *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* 3, no. 8 (2015): 593–94, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-8587\(15\)00235-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-8587(15)00235-3).

¹⁵ Olivier De Schutter, "The Political Economy of the Right to Food," *Agriculture and Human Values* 37, no. 4 (2020): 1091–1103, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10062-3>.

¹⁶ Danielle Resnick, Johan Swinnen, and Suresh Babu, "Governance Reforms for Food System Transformation," *Global Food Security* 28 (2021): 100501, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2021.100501>.

administrative governance through a nationwide public service designed to improve nutritional outcomes among children and other vulnerable populations.

The findings demonstrate that Indonesia has established a progressively stronger legal framework governing the free nutritious meals program through Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2024 establishing the National Nutrition Agency and Presidential Regulation Number 115 of 2025 regulating the governance of the free nutritious meals program. These regulations define institutional authority, funding mechanisms, beneficiary criteria, administrative coordination, and implementation procedures that support nationwide program delivery.¹⁷ Legal development theory regards institutional design as an essential component of regulatory effectiveness because legal certainty depends not only on statutory norms but also on administrative structures capable of implementing constitutional objectives. The adoption of these regulations therefore reflects a significant effort to institutionalize constitutional responsibility through a governance framework that prioritizes human rights protection, accountability, and public welfare.

Despite the existence of a comprehensive legal framework, the research identifies several structural challenges that continue to affect the effectiveness of free nutritious meals governance. One of the most significant concerns involves institutional coordination between the central government and regional authorities responsible for program implementation. Variations in administrative capacity, financial resources, logistical infrastructure, and technical expertise produce unequal service delivery across different provinces and districts.¹⁸ These disparities illustrate that regulatory completeness alone cannot guarantee uniform implementation. Legal development theory emphasizes that effective governance depends upon institutional coherence capable of translating legal norms into consistent administrative practice throughout the national territory.

Institutional fragmentation also influences the quality of administrative accountability. The governance of free nutritious meals requires collaboration among the National Nutrition Agency, ministries, regional governments, educational institutions, health authorities, and food suppliers. Effective coordination depends upon clearly defined legal authority, transparent decision-making, and integrated supervisory mechanisms. The findings indicate that overlapping responsibilities and administrative complexity occasionally reduce operational efficiency and delay policy execution.¹⁹ Good governance theory recognizes institutional coordination as a prerequisite for effective public administration because fragmented authority

¹⁷ Jessica Fanzo et al., "Rigorous Monitoring Is Necessary to Guide Food System Transformation in the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals," *Nature Food* 2, no. 8 (2021): 556–65, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00374-8>.

¹⁸ Otong Syuhada, Ikmal Hisham, and Nazli Ismail Nawang, "Legal Politics and Fulfillment of Citizens' Basic Rights in Indonesia's Democratic State," *Jurnal Wawasan Yuridika* 8, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.25072/jwy.v8i1.4190>.

¹⁹ Rudy et al., "Implementation of Civil Rights against Vulnerable Groups in the Legal and Constitutional System in Indonesia," *Hasanuddin Law Review* 8, no. 3 (2025): 299–309, <https://doi.org/10.20956/halrev.v8i3.4229>.

frequently weakens legal certainty and diminishes the capacity of public institutions to fulfill constitutional obligations.

Food safety represents another fundamental issue directly connected to constitutional protection and human rights guarantees. Several reported cases of food contamination associated with free nutritious meals implementation demonstrate that nutritional assistance cannot be separated from food quality assurance and public health protection. Access to nutritious meals loses its constitutional value if food safety standards are inadequately supervised or inconsistently enforced. Human rights doctrine recognizes the right to adequate food as encompassing nutritional quality, safety, and accessibility rather than food availability alone. Government responsibility therefore includes establishing effective inspection systems, preventive monitoring, quality control procedures, and rapid institutional responses capable of protecting beneficiaries from avoidable health risks.

The research further demonstrates that transparency and accountability remain critical challenges affecting public confidence in the free nutritious meals program. Large-scale welfare initiatives financed through public expenditure require governance mechanisms that ensure openness throughout procurement, budgeting, food distribution, and program evaluation. Public access to reliable information enables citizens to participate in oversight while strengthening institutional legitimacy.²⁰ Weak reporting systems, limited disclosure of operational information, and inconsistent monitoring mechanisms may create opportunities for administrative irregularities that undermine the effectiveness of constitutional welfare programs. Legal development therefore requires governance arrangements capable of combining financial accountability with meaningful public participation.

Evaluation of the free nutritious meals program should extend beyond regulatory compliance and administrative implementation. Legal development theory argues that the effectiveness of law must ultimately be measured by its capacity to achieve constitutional objectives and improve social welfare. Success therefore depends upon measurable improvements in nutritional status, reductions in childhood stunting, enhanced public health outcomes, and equitable access to nutritious food among vulnerable populations. Governance quality becomes a decisive factor because constitutional rights acquire practical meaning only when legal institutions consistently deliver fair, accountable, transparent, and effective public services. Sustainable legal development consequently requires continuous institutional reform capable of strengthening both governance performance and human rights protection.

The findings also demonstrate that public participation has not yet become an integral component of free nutritious meals governance. Contemporary governance theory recognizes citizen participation as an essential element supporting accountability, transparency, and democratic legitimacy. Welfare programs generate greater effectiveness when beneficiaries, civil society organizations, academic institutions, professional associations, and local communities actively contribute to planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Broader participation enables policymakers to identify implementation challenges more accurately while improving

²⁰ Elisa Winata et al., "State Responsibility and the Environmental Protection Crisis from a Legal Philosophy Perspective," *Academia Open* 11, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.11.2026.14133>.

institutional responsiveness. Limited opportunities for public engagement reduce the capacity of governance mechanisms to accommodate local needs and weaken the reciprocal relationship between constitutional rights and democratic accountability.

Another important issue concerns the protection of vulnerable groups, who constitute the primary beneficiaries of the free nutritious meals program. Children, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and economically disadvantaged households receive special constitutional protection because they experience greater nutritional vulnerability and possess limited access to adequate food. Welfare State Theory places these groups at the center of public policy because substantive equality requires affirmative state intervention rather than formal legal equality alone. Effective legal development therefore requires governance arrangements capable of ensuring equitable distribution regardless of geographical location or regional administrative capacity. Persistent disparities among regions indicate that equal constitutional protection has not yet been fully realized through existing institutional mechanisms.

Digital governance has emerged as another essential component supporting effective implementation of nationwide welfare programs. Information technology improves institutional coordination by integrating beneficiary databases, procurement systems, nutritional monitoring, financial reporting, and supervisory mechanisms into a unified administrative platform. Digital integration also strengthens transparency by allowing public access to reliable information concerning program implementation and government expenditure. The research indicates that existing information systems remain fragmented across institutions, limiting the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation activities. Strengthening digital governance would therefore enhance legal certainty, administrative efficiency, and institutional accountability while supporting evidence-based decision-making throughout the implementation process.

The relationship between legal development and human rights demonstrates that constitutional guarantees require more than comprehensive legislation. Regulatory effectiveness depends upon governance structures capable of ensuring consistent implementation through coordinated institutions, transparent administration, accountable financial management, and effective public supervision. Legal norms become meaningful only when administrative institutions operate according to the principles of legality, proportionality, fairness, and public responsibility. The findings therefore support socio-legal scholarship arguing that institutional quality functions as the principal mechanism connecting constitutional commitments with practical realization of fundamental rights. Governance reform consequently represents an indispensable element of legal development rather than a supplementary administrative objective.

This study concludes that Indonesia has established a robust normative foundation supporting the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals Program through constitutional guarantees, statutory legislation, and implementing regulations aligned with human rights obligations. Nevertheless, legal certainty alone remains insufficient to ensure effective fulfillment of the constitutional right to adequate food and social welfare. Institutional coordination, regulatory harmonization, food safety supervision, transparency, accountability, digital governance, and public participation require continuous strengthening to improve governance quality. The study further argues that integrating Legal Development Theory,

Human Rights Theory, Good Governance Theory, and Welfare State Theory offers a comprehensive analytical framework capable of explaining how governance structures determine the effectiveness of constitutional rights protection. This integrated framework contributes to socio-legal scholarship by demonstrating that sustainable legal development depends upon the reciprocal relationship between normative legal commitments and accountable public governance dedicated to realizing social justice and human dignity.

B. A Governance Model for Strengthening Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program Based on Legal Development, Human Rights, Good Governance, and Public Accountability

The findings indicate that strengthening the governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program requires a comprehensive legal development strategy that integrates constitutional values, human rights obligations, institutional effectiveness, and public accountability into a unified governance framework. Legal development should not be confined to the enactment of legislation because regulatory completeness alone cannot guarantee the realization of constitutional rights.²¹ Sustainable governance depends upon institutions capable of implementing legal norms through transparent administration, coordinated decision-making, and effective public service delivery. This approach reflects the principle that legal systems achieve legitimacy only when constitutional guarantees produce measurable improvements in social welfare. Consequently, governance reform becomes an indispensable element of legal development rather than a complementary administrative exercise.

Legal Development Theory provides the principal foundation for constructing the proposed governance model. The theory argues that legal modernization requires continuous interaction among legal norms, institutional structures, and governance practices capable of responding to evolving social needs. Constitutional commitments concerning social welfare demand governance arrangements that transform normative obligations into effective administrative performance.²² The free nutritious meals program therefore illustrates how legal development should strengthen institutional capacity while maintaining consistency with constitutional principles and statutory mandates. Public institutions become instruments through which constitutional rights are realized, making governance quality a decisive factor determining the effectiveness of legal protection. A coherent governance model consequently requires regulatory certainty, institutional coordination, and adaptive administrative mechanisms operating under clearly defined legal authority.

The first component of the proposed model emphasizes regulatory harmonization as the cornerstone of institutional effectiveness. The current regulatory framework consists of constitutional provisions, statutory legislation, presidential regulations, and administrative

²¹ Matthew Canfield et al., "Why Food Systems Governance Must Be Grounded in Human Rights," *Nature Food* 6, no. 9 (2025): 817–18, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01217-9>.

²² Dori Patay et al., "Whole-of-Food System Governance for Transformative Change," *Nature Food* 6, no. 7 (2025): 636–40, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01196-x>.

policies implemented by multiple public institutions. Although each instrument contributes to program implementation, overlapping authority and fragmented responsibilities may reduce administrative efficiency and create uncertainty regarding institutional accountability. Harmonizing these regulatory instruments would establish clearer distribution of authority among the National Nutrition Agency, relevant ministries, regional governments, supervisory institutions, and implementing agencies. Greater legal coherence would improve institutional coordination, reduce bureaucratic duplication, and strengthen legal certainty throughout every stage of policy implementation.

The second component strengthens governance through the integration of human rights principles into every administrative process associated with the free nutritious meals program. Human Rights Theory recognizes adequate food as an inseparable element of human dignity rather than a benefit distributed through social assistance alone. Public authorities therefore carry legal obligations extending beyond food provision to include nutritional adequacy, food safety, equitable accessibility, and protection against discriminatory treatment. Administrative standards should incorporate the principles of equality, non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, proportionality, and respect for human dignity.²³ Adoption of these principles would ensure that every governance decision contributes directly to the realization of constitutional rights while reducing disparities affecting vulnerable populations across different regions.

The third component places Good Governance Theory at the center of institutional reform by emphasizing legality, transparency, participation, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness as mutually reinforcing governance principles. These principles establish operational standards guiding policy formulation, implementation, supervision, and evaluation throughout the entire program cycle. Governance arrangements grounded in these principles improve institutional credibility while strengthening public confidence in government performance. Accountability mechanisms become more effective when administrative decisions remain transparent and subject to public scrutiny, whereas participatory governance enhances policy responsiveness by incorporating community feedback into decision-making processes. The proposed governance model therefore positions good governance not merely as an administrative objective but as a constitutional mechanism ensuring that legal development consistently advances human rights protection and sustainable public welfare.

The fourth component of the proposed governance model emphasizes the development of an integrated digital governance system capable of supporting every stage of free nutritious meals implementation. Digital transformation strengthens administrative efficiency by connecting beneficiary registration, nutritional assessment, food procurement, distribution, financial management, monitoring, and evaluation through a unified information platform. Institutional Theory explains that modern public organizations achieve greater effectiveness

²³ David Mason-D'Croz, "Rigorous Anticipatory Governance Is Needed for Responsible Food System Transformation," *Nature Food* 6, no. 10 (2025): 920–26, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01241-9>.

when information flows seamlessly across organizational boundaries.²⁴ Integration of digital infrastructure also minimizes duplication of administrative processes while improving the accuracy and reliability of policy implementation. A comprehensive digital governance architecture consequently enhances legal certainty, institutional responsiveness, and evidence-based decision-making across all levels of government.

Digital governance also strengthens transparency by providing real-time access to information concerning budget utilization, procurement activities, beneficiary coverage, food quality monitoring, and program performance. Public access to reliable information promotes institutional accountability because administrative actions become subject to continuous public oversight. Transparent reporting systems further improve coordination among government agencies by reducing information asymmetry and facilitating timely policy adjustments whenever implementation challenges emerge. Technological innovation therefore functions not merely as an administrative instrument but also as a governance mechanism that reinforces constitutional principles of openness, accountability, and public participation. Effective digital governance ultimately strengthens institutional legitimacy while supporting sustainable legal development.

The fifth component introduces a collaborative oversight mechanism that extends supervision beyond conventional internal government auditing. Governance effectiveness depends upon active participation by multiple oversight institutions possessing complementary legal authority and professional expertise. The proposed model therefore encourages cooperation among the National Nutrition Agency, the Supreme Audit Board, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, the National Human Rights Commission, regional governments, academic institutions, civil society organizations, professional associations, and mass media.²⁵ Such collaboration establishes a multidimensional accountability framework capable of identifying legal, administrative, financial, and operational deficiencies more comprehensively. Shared responsibility among oversight institutions significantly reduces governance risks while strengthening public confidence in national welfare programs.

Participatory oversight also contributes to democratic governance by enabling beneficiaries and local communities to monitor program implementation directly. Public participation enhances institutional responsiveness because local observations frequently reveal operational problems that may not be detected through formal administrative supervision alone. Community-based monitoring encourages greater transparency, strengthens public trust, and promotes institutional learning through continuous feedback. Good Governance Theory recognizes participatory supervision as an essential mechanism for balancing governmental authority with democratic accountability. Expanding opportunities for public engagement

²⁴ Peter Jackson, "Food as a Commodity, Human Right or Common Good," *Nature Food* 2, no. 3 (2021): 132–34, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00245-5>.

²⁵ Lukas Paul Fesenfeld, Jeroen Candel, and Franziska Gaupp, "Governance Principles for Accelerating Food Systems Transformation in the European Union," *Nature Food* 4, no. 10 (2023): 826–29, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-023-00850-6>.

therefore transforms citizens from passive beneficiaries into active partners supporting effective implementation and continuous institutional improvement.

The sixth component strengthens public accountability through performance-based auditing rather than relying exclusively on conventional financial audits. Evaluation of national welfare programs should measure whether public expenditure successfully advances constitutional objectives and improves the realization of human rights. Performance indicators should therefore include nutritional outcomes, food safety compliance, beneficiary satisfaction, administrative efficiency, institutional responsiveness, reductions in childhood stunting, equitable service distribution, and fulfillment of constitutional rights.²⁶ Comprehensive performance evaluation enables policymakers to identify governance weaknesses while generating empirical evidence for future regulatory reform. Accountability grounded in measurable public outcomes ultimately reinforces the relationship between legal development, institutional effectiveness, and sustainable social welfare.

The seventh component of the proposed governance model focuses on strengthening institutional capacity, particularly the National Nutrition Agency and the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units. Institutional effectiveness depends upon competent human resources, standardized administrative procedures, adequate financial support, reliable laboratory facilities, and efficient distribution infrastructure. Institutional Theory emphasizes that organizational performance improves when governance structures operate through clearly defined responsibilities supported by sufficient administrative capacity. Continuous professional training, standardized operational guidelines, and coordinated interagency cooperation are therefore essential for ensuring consistent implementation throughout Indonesia. Strong institutions provide the operational foundation required for transforming constitutional obligations into sustainable public services.

Institutional strengthening should also prioritize the establishment of uniform food safety standards and integrated quality assurance mechanisms. Nutritional assistance achieves its constitutional purpose only when meals satisfy recognized standards of nutritional adequacy, hygiene, and consumer safety. Laboratory testing, periodic inspections, standardized procurement procedures, and evidence-based nutritional assessments should become mandatory components of program implementation. Preventive supervision significantly reduces public health risks while reinforcing confidence in government institutions responsible for protecting fundamental rights. A governance framework emphasizing quality assurance consequently strengthens both legal certainty and public trust by ensuring that constitutional guarantees are realized through safe and reliable public services.

The eighth component proposes an evaluation framework grounded in human rights indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conventional evaluation frequently concentrates on financial absorption and administrative completion without examining whether public programs effectively fulfill constitutional rights. The proposed framework expands

²⁶ Barbara Burlingame, Rubina Hakeem, and Edith Feskens, "Who Gets to Speak for Science in the Race to Transform Global Food Systems," *Nature Food* 6, no. 10 (2025): 907–8, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01239-3>.

performance assessment by measuring improvements in nutritional status, reductions in childhood stunting, equitable access to nutritious food, protection of vulnerable groups, institutional responsiveness, and long-term public health outcomes. Human rights indicators enable policymakers to evaluate whether governance mechanisms genuinely advance substantive equality and social justice. Alignment with the SDGs further integrates national welfare policy with internationally recognized standards promoting sustainable and inclusive development.

A comprehensive governance model should further adopt a system of continuous regulatory review and adaptive legal reform. Legal development remains an ongoing process because governance challenges evolve alongside demographic change, technological innovation, fiscal priorities, and institutional experience. Periodic evaluation of legislation, implementing regulations, and administrative policies enables government institutions to identify regulatory inconsistencies and respond effectively to emerging governance issues. Adaptive legal reform also strengthens institutional resilience by ensuring that legal norms remain responsive to changing public needs without compromising constitutional principles or human rights obligations. Continuous regulatory improvement therefore represents an essential characteristic of sustainable governance rather than an exceptional legislative activity.

The findings demonstrate that a governance model integrating Legal Development Theory, Human Rights Theory, Good Governance Theory, Welfare State Theory, and Institutional Theory provides the most comprehensive framework for strengthening the implementation of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program. This integrated model extends beyond regulatory compliance by emphasizing institutional effectiveness, legal certainty, transparency, accountability, participation, digital governance, and human rights protection as mutually reinforcing components of constitutional governance. The proposed framework also addresses the theoretical gap identified in previous scholarship by demonstrating that effective realization of constitutional rights depends upon the interaction between legal development and governance quality rather than statutory regulation alone. Consequently, sustainable legal development should be understood as a dynamic process that continuously improves institutional capacity, reinforces democratic accountability, and secures equitable access to adequate food as a constitutional right supporting Indonesia's long-term welfare state objectives.

CONCLUSION

Legal development and human rights instruments provide a strong normative foundation for the governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) as a constitutional mechanism for fulfilling the rights to adequate food, health, and social welfare. The study demonstrates that regulatory legitimacy alone is insufficient because significant gaps remain between normative commitments and implementation, particularly regarding institutional coordination, food safety oversight, transparency, and accountability. To address these challenges, this study proposes an integrated governance model based on legal development, human rights, good governance, institutional effectiveness, and public accountability. The model emphasizes regulatory harmonization, institutional strengthening, digital governance, collaborative oversight, performance-based auditing, public participation, and human rights-

oriented evaluation. Adoption of this framework is expected to strengthen legal certainty, improve governance quality, enhance protection of constitutional rights, and promote the long-term sustainability of the MBG program as a strategic instrument for advancing Indonesia's welfare state objectives.

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