

## **UNICEF’s Role in Handling Victims of Violence Against Children and Women in The City of Surabaya**

**Hafidhotun Nisa’, Amanda Feradatuz Zahra, Nur Mars Romadhona,  
Siti Aisyah Aulia Rachman, Nadia Aulia Rachma**

Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur

\*Corresponding author. Email: [22044010049@student.upnjatim.ac.id](mailto:22044010049@student.upnjatim.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

Violence against children and women remains a serious issue requiring special attention and handling in various cities across Indonesia, particularly in Surabaya. Given the high rate of violence against children and women in the city, UNICEF’s role as an international organization focused on the rights of children and women is crucial in efforts to prevent and address victims of violence in Surabaya. This research focuses on UNICEF’s efforts to reduce and handle cases of violence against children and women through collaboration with authorities in Surabaya. This study aims to understand UNICEF’s role in addressing cases of violence against children and women, not only as a provider of assistance but also as a critical partner to the local government in formulating effective policies and programs. UNICEF Surabaya is actively engaged through the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), which aims to make Surabaya a child-friendly city. In 2023, Surabaya became the first city in Indonesia to officially sign the Annual Work Plan to join the global CFCI network. The author uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type through a literature review and related news articles based on the concept of International Organizations outlined by Kelly Kate Pease. In this study, the author argues that the role of international organizations like UNICEF is limited to advocating for the rights of children and women and as a Problem Solver, Aid Provider, and Capacity Builder through collaboration with relevant stakeholders in Surabaya.

**Keywords:** *UNICEF, Child Violence, Woman Violence, Domestic Violence, Local government*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cases of violence against children and women in East Java have increased from 2021 to 2023. The province of East Java ranks third in Indonesia for instances of violence against children and women. In 2021, there were 10,241 cases of violence against women and children in East Java. In 2022, this number increased to 11,266 cases; by 2023, it had risen again to 11,441 cases (KEMENPPPA, 2023). Among these numerous cases of violence, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), an international organization working to protect and promote the welfare of children worldwide, has been involved. Global concern over issues threatening the rights of children and women prompted the United Nations (UN) to mandate the formation of an organization with a primary focus on children's empowerment, namely UNICEF.

The main goal of establishing this organization is to meet the unmet needs of children in developing countries. Every country in the world has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the UN General Assembly, which outlines four

categories of children's rights: survival rights, protection rights, development rights, and participation rights. UNICEF's primary priority is to improve the quality of life for children worldwide. UNICEF first assisted Indonesia in 1950 and has since committed to improving women's and children's living standards. UNICEF's priorities in Indonesia include providing sufficient aid and supplies to ensure children's survival in Indonesia. On January 26, 1990, the Indonesian government decided to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child by issuing Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990. UNICEF has successfully facilitated cooperation in 15 provinces across Indonesia, covering a population of 20 million. UNICEF and its partners have successfully developed the 2022 Child Protection Law, which serves as Indonesia's legal foundation for child protection. UNICEF also provides financial support for children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation to help them overcome their plight. Several programs implemented by UNICEF in Indonesia include equitable primary education for all segments of society, child health and nutrition, child protection, HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation in Indonesia, and addressing water and sanitation issues (Oktadewi & Khairiyah, 2018).

As an international organization that collaborates with various countries worldwide, including Indonesia, UNICEF also works with local governments within these countries. In Surabaya, UNICEF collaborated with the city government to make Surabaya a child-friendly city by 2022. The Surabaya city government and UNICEF also worked with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), child advocacy groups, and the Surabaya Children's Forum. This program aims to fulfill the civil rights of children, such as the right to access healthcare and education (Harian Surabaya, 2022). Furthermore, in 2023, the Surabaya city government, the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), and UNICEF ratified the annual work plan for the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) program. The CFCI program is expected to benefit the children of Surabaya, particularly in terms of health, protection, and education (Kominfo Jawa Timur, 2023). In 2024, UNICEF and the Indonesian National Police (Polri) cooperated to protect children in Surabaya. Police officers, who play a crucial role in enforcing children's rights, ensuring safety, providing assistance, and intervening to protect children, will receive training on mental health and self-care while handling cases of violence (Harjanto, 2024).

Several studies are relevant to the discussion of UNICEF's role and efforts in addressing violence against children and women. For example, in the journal *"Kontribusi UNICEF Terhadap Upaya Menegakkan Perlindungan Anak di Indonesia"* by Mudji and Caharamayang (2017), the authors discuss UNICEF's contribution to enforcing child protection in Indonesia between 2011 and 2015, focusing on violations, violence, child exploitation, and registration. This study employs human rights theory, emphasizing the importance of child protection as a fundamental right that the state must guarantee. The data show that despite significant UNICEF policies and programs, challenges such as public awareness, inaccurate data, and economic and funding issues remain substantial. In conclusion, UNICEF plays a crucial role in helping Indonesia improve child protection, but further efforts are needed to address existing challenges comprehensively.

In an article written by Luerdia and Mardiyanti titled *"Peran Organisasi Internasional di Wilayah Perang: Upaya UNICEF dalam Melindungi Hak-Hak Anak di Yaman,"* the authors discuss UNICEF's role in protecting the rights of children affected by the war in Yemen. The article uses a Constructivist approach, emphasizing non-material factors such as norms, identity, and culture in international relations. The study employs role theory, as explained by Sluss, van Dick & Thomson (2011), in which political behavior is influenced by expectations regarding the role held by the actor. Additionally, the concept of the independence of international organizations is applied to explain how UNICEF can act independently, even though it operates under the UN. UNICEF's identity, international norms such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and organizational independence are crucial factors that drive UNICEF's role in protecting children's rights in Yemen.

In the journal *"Peran UNICEF dalam Perlindungan Anak di Indonesia,"* Regina et al. (2022) raise serious issues faced by children in Indonesia, such as violence, exploitation, early marriage, and a lack of access to fundamental rights. These problems hinder children's development and negatively affect their future. As part of the UN, UNICEF plays a vital role in protecting children's rights through various programs and policies aimed at ensuring children's survival, security, and freedom. The authors of this study show that UNICEF not only monitors the issues children face but also strives to resolve and prevent these problems through comprehensive programs. UNICEF has significantly protected children in Indonesia by collaborating with the government and other stakeholders. However, challenges in policy implementation, especially in law enforcement and the prevention of violence against children, remain.

Another study titled *"Penanganan Perdagangan Narkoba di Indonesia oleh UNODC Tahun 2017-2020"* by Eric Rolando and Renitha Dwi Hapsari (2024) analyzes the role of UNODC in combating organized crime, particularly narcotics, through its Country Programme during 2017-2020. UNODC's role focuses on Drug Demand Reduction and HIV/AIDS. As a Capacity Builder, UNODC collaborates with WHO to provide guidance to relevant parties through the Family Treatment program, aiming to support families and adolescents affected by narcotics. As a Problem Solver, UNODC supports Alternative Development, whose primary goal is eradicating narcotics crops.

Based on previous studies discussing the role of international organizations, none have specifically addressed the role of UNICEF as an international organization collaborating with the Surabaya city government to tackle the issues affecting children and women from 2021 to 2023. This research explores the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya city government.

## METHODS

This research employs a descriptive study with a qualitative method to provide an overview of the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government in addressing victims of violence against children and women in Surabaya during the 2021-2023 period. This collaboration includes various local-level programs for protecting

children and women, such as improving victim support services, violence prevention programs, and public awareness campaigns. The data in this research were collected through a literature review and articles from credible sources, such as official UNICEF reports, government documents, and relevant academic publications.

The research refers to the theory of the role of international organizations outlined by Kelly Kate Pease in her book *“International Organizations: Perspectives on Global Governance”* (2008). Kelly Kate Pease states that every international organization has a role corresponding to its characteristics and fundamental principles. In the context of this research, UNICEF's role in collaborating with the Surabaya City Government to address victims of violence against children and women can be explained through several vital functions. First, as a problem solver, UNICEF assists Surabaya in addressing the issue of violence against children and women through collaborative protection and prevention programs. UNICEF acts as a strategic partner in designing solutions alongside the local government. Second, as an aid provider, according to Pease's view, UNICEF also provides aid by offering technical support, financial assistance, and resources necessary to strengthen the system of victim protection in Surabaya, particularly for children and women. This aid includes providing psychosocial services, legal protection, and rehabilitation programs. Third, as a capacity builder, UNICEF works to enhance the Surabaya City Government and related institution's capacity to effectively handle violence cases, including training, tools, and support to improve social protection services. Thus, this research focuses on UNICEF's roles as a problem solver, capacity builder, and aid provider in supporting the handling of victims of violence against children and women in Surabaya during the 2021-2023 period (Pease, 2008).

This research uses content analysis to analyze data from articles, official documents, reports, and academic publications. This technique aims to identify patterns and meanings from the data by categorizing information into relevant categories. This approach helps in understanding UNICEF's role as a problem solver, aid provider, and capacity builder in addressing violence against children and women in Surabaya through collaboration with the local government (Krippendorff, 2004).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Problem Solver**

The role of an international organization as a problem solver encompasses their primary function in helping countries address the root causes of various global challenges. International organizations like UNICEF collaborate with local governments to design and implement relevant solutions to the issues at hand. In the context of the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government, the problem solver's role is manifested through collaborative actions in addressing violence against children and women. UNICEF not only provides short-term solutions but also supports the

government in designing preventive programs and interventions to empower local communities.

This problem solver role is clearly demonstrated in the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government, where they initiated programs such as *‘Kelurahan Ramah Perempuan dan Anak and RW Responsive Gender’* as preventive measures against violence at the community level. These programs involve extensive socialization to more than 1,000 RWs in Surabaya, aimed at raising awareness about the importance of gender equality and how to handle violence against women and children in local neighborhoods. By involving RT and RW leaders and educating the community to be more responsive to issues of violence, the program seeks to create a safer environment and empower women. It also promotes women's empowerment in each RW by providing skills training and raising awareness of their rights. The goal is for women to actively participate in their communities, not only to reduce violence cases but also to enhance economic welfare and independence. This program illustrates how UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government act as problem solvers in empowering communities to take more effective preventive measures against violence at the grassroots level (Elaine, 2024).

### **Aid Provider**

International organizations, as aid providers, play the role of offering technical support, financial assistance, and necessary resources. UNICEF fulfills its role as an aid provider by assisting in resolving cases of violence against children in Surabaya and strengthening the victim protection system, particularly for children and women. This support includes the provision of psychosocial services, legal protection, and rehabilitation programs. UNICEF supports Surabaya in achieving the status of a child-friendly city under the *Child Friendly Cities Initiative* (CFCI). Together with Bappenas, UNICEF signed the CFCI program, which aims to protect children in Surabaya and ensure their access to health and education (Kominfo Jawa Timur, 2023). UNICEF is committed to supporting whatever Surabaya needs to meet the indicators of a child-friendly city. Additionally, UNICEF and the *“Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak and Pengendalian Penduduk dan Keluarga Berencana” (DP3A-P2KB)* have partnered in a program to prevent online sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) in several schools in Surabaya, starting from elementary school levels. UNICEF and Kemen PPPA continue to work to improve the quality of PUSPAGA (Family Learning Centers) services to provide psychosocial and mental health support for the community, particularly children (Kemen PPPA, 2024).

### **Capacity Builder**

As a capacity builder, UNICEF plays a role in enhancing the capacity of the Surabaya City Government and related institutions to handle violence cases effectively. This includes providing training, tools, and support to improve social protection services. Between 2021 and 2023, many cases of violence involving children occurred in Surabaya. According to the Head of the *Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan and*

*Pengendalian Penduduk dan Keluarga Berencana (DP3A-PPKB)*, 122 cases of violence against children were reported between January and August 2023 (Fahmi, 2023). UNICEF, as an organization focused on fulfilling children's rights, has collaborated with the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) and Bappenas to handle cases of violence against children. Police officers are one of the key actors directly involved in handling cases and are the first responders to receive reports.

The collaboration included mental health training for 100 police officers in Surabaya to enhance their ability to handle cases involving children. Police officers play a vital role in providing immediate assistance to protect children. The training aims to ensure that police officers have a better understanding of how to handle cases of violence involving children. As crimes have become more complex, there is a need for training to increase the knowledge and skills of officers in combating crime. Additionally, this training is essential for the mental well-being of officers constantly facing traumatic and emotional cases. The most important aspect of this training is to maximize the officers' ability to handle child abuse cases effectively, as it is crucial for them to understand mental health and to treat victims carefully and with special consideration (Hasana, 2024).

### **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this research confirms that the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government in addressing violence against children and women during the 2021-2023 period has shown a significant positive impact. UNICEF played the roles of problem solver, aid provider, and capacity builder in the efforts to prevent and handle violence through various collaboratively designed programs. As a problem solver, UNICEF promoted the creation of safer and more responsive environments at the community level through initiatives like *Kelurahan Ramah Perempuan dan Anak*. As an aid provider, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to strengthen victim protection systems. Meanwhile, as a capacity builder, UNICEF enhanced the capacities of police officers and related institutions through mental health training, helping to handle violence cases more effectively.

Although this study successfully illustrates the roles and impact of the collaboration between UNICEF and the Surabaya City Government, the analytical framework used, namely Kelly Kate Pease's theory of international organizational roles, could be enriched by incorporating a deeper perspective on the local role in policy implementation. For future research, it is recommended to expand the focus on how local communities and non-governmental actors play a role in strengthening child and women protection initiatives. Additionally, evaluating the long-term effectiveness of the programs implemented could provide further insights into the sustainability of the collaboration between UNICEF and the local government.

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