



# Transfer and Adaptation of Global Policies: The Dynamics of Implementing Child-Friendly Cities in Padang

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## ABSTRACT

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The Child Friendly City (CFC) policy is a global initiative adopted by various countries, including Indonesia, to ensure children's rights and protection in urban areas. Padang City has implemented this policy through local regulations and five strategic programs. However, achieving the "CFC Primary Category" administratively does not fully reflect success in improving children's quality of life at the local level. This study explores the dynamics of policy transfer and adaptation of the CFC agenda from global and national levels to Padang, focusing on local actors, adaptation forms, and implementation challenges. Using a qualitative approach and the policy transfer framework, data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and field observations. The findings highlight five key barriers to effective adaptation: unequal child participation, low parenting literacy, stigma toward counseling, limited resources, inadequate school preparedness, and weak digital literacy. The study suggests that the policy transfer process has been partial, lacking value internalization and institutional change. The implications for educational management include integrating local educational policies with child protection efforts, enhancing teacher training, and fostering greater community involvement to address these challenges.

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## INTRODUCTION

The protection and fulfillment of children's rights have become integral parts of global development discourse. International commitments to this cause are reflected in initiatives such as the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), launched by UNICEF in 2006, and the World Fit for Children document, ratified during the 2002 UN Special Session. These initiatives aim to transform cities into safe, inclusive, and child-friendly spaces. This policy not only sets global standards but also encourages local governments to adapt policies to the social,

cultural, and institutional conditions in their respective areas. In Indonesia, the Child-Friendly City (KLA) concept is incorporated within the national legal framework through various laws, including Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, Presidential Regulation No. 25 of 2021 on Child-Friendly City Policy, and Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2011. The city of Padang has adopted this agenda by establishing Regional Regulation No. 12 of 2019 on the Implementation of Child-Friendly Cities, which encompasses five main programs: Forum Anak, PUSPAGA, School-Friendly Children, PAMSIMAS, and the SiLaras app.

Despite administrative achievements in implementing Child-Friendly City initiatives, the substantive fulfillment of children's rights at the local level is still facing significant challenges. These challenges are often reflected in the limited capacity of local governments to fully implement child protection programs in a way that effectively responds to community needs. Studies such as Pamarito (2024) highlight that the implementation of special protection clusters in Padang is hindered by communication and coordination barriers between sectors. Fariz (2023) highlights the limited capacity of local apparatus and regulations within the family environment and the alternative care cluster. Meanwhile, Widianita (2023) argues that the communication strategy of Padang's Dinas P3A has been ineffective in reaching marginalized communities. These gaps highlight a significant issue: despite legal frameworks and regulations being in place, the translation of child protection policies into tangible actions at the local level still faces numerous obstacles, particularly in peripheral communities.

The gap between administrative achievements and the actual realization of child protection policies in Padang presents a pressing issue. Although the city has received the "KLA Main Category" award from the central government, local actors still face difficulties in translating global policy frameworks, such as CFCI, into culturally appropriate practices. Local authorities, civil society organizations, and even the adat (customary) community struggle to interpret and implement these global norms effectively within the Minangkabau cultural context. The ongoing misalignment between policy objectives and practical implementation underlines the complexity of policy adaptation in a local context. These disparities underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of the policy transfer process, particularly in light of the unique social and cultural context of Padang. Furthermore, despite the positive outlook on administrative efforts, there is a lack of a systematic approach to overcoming barriers to policy adoption.

Previous research on child protection and the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) has primarily focused on administrative measures and

outputs. For instance, the studies conducted by Pamarito (2024), Fariz (2023), and Widianita (2023) evaluate various aspects of policy implementation; however, they fall short of providing an in-depth exploration of how global policies, such as CFCI, are transferred and adapted in local contexts. While they identify barriers in communication, coordination, and regional capacity, these studies do not thoroughly address how local actors—especially from the government, civil society, and adat communities—engage with global policies and transform them into local practices. As Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) suggest, policy transfer involves understanding how external norms are negotiated and operationalized within a regional setting. This process is not sufficiently explored in the existing literature. This gap presents an opportunity for a more comprehensive study of the policy transfer and adaptation process in the context of child protection.

The gap in existing research lies in understanding the dynamic interplay between global policy frameworks, such as CFCI, and local cultural and institutional structures. Most studies focus on the outputs and formal structures of child protection policies but overlook the nuanced ways in which these policies are interpreted and negotiated by local actors. As Grindle (1991) argues, successful policy adaptation depends on how external norms are understood and negotiated within the local context. Therefore, there is a critical need for a research approach that goes beyond evaluating administrative outputs and delves into the social-political and cultural dynamics of policy adaptation, especially in the case of Child-Friendly Cities. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the local process of adapting and transferring global norms into concrete child protection practices in Padang.

This study introduces an innovative approach by applying the concept of policy transfer to explore the dynamics of adapting global child protection policies, particularly the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), within the unique socio-cultural framework of Padang. Unlike previous research, this study examines not only the administrative outputs but also the social-political and cultural factors that influence how local actors—from the government to civil society and adat communities—engage with and implement these global norms. By focusing on the process of policy transfer and adaptation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how international policies can be meaningfully integrated into local contexts. Furthermore, this approach has significant implications for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of child protection policies in Indonesia, particularly in areas with diverse cultural backgrounds.

The core research problem addressed in this study is the challenge of transferring and adapting global child protection policies, particularly the

Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), to local contexts such as Padang. Specifically, the research will examine how local actors, including government officials, civil society organizations, and adat communities, interpret and apply these global norms within the unique social, cultural, and institutional structures of Padang. The preliminary argument of this study is that successful policy transfer does not solely depend on formal legal frameworks or administrative outputs, but instead on the effective negotiation and operationalization of external norms in a way that resonates with local values, beliefs, and practices. This research will contribute to filling the existing literature gap by offering insights into the complex processes of policy transfer and adaptation, providing a more nuanced understanding of how global child protection policies can be successfully integrated into local contexts. The findings will also provide practical recommendations for enhancing child protection policies in Padang and other comparable localities.

## **METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore in depth how the Child-Friendly City (KLA) policy, originating from global and national levels, is translated into the local context of Padang. This approach was chosen because it aims to understand the meaning, interpretation, and practices of the policy as carried out by local actors within the unique socio-cultural context of Minangkabau (Geertz, 1973). The research is focused on the city of Padang, West Sumatra, which has officially earned the "Main Category KLA" status. Despite this administrative achievement, the substantive fulfillment of children's rights on the ground has not fully aligned with the legal and regulatory achievements. Therefore, Padang is a relevant location to study the dynamics of implementing a policy transferred from global frameworks.

The subjects of this research involve various actors who play a role in the implementation of the KLA policy in Padang, divided into three main categories: government actors, including the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DP3A), Bappeda, and related regional agencies (OPDs); civil society actors, such as the managers of the Children's Forum, PUSPAGA, community leaders, and local communities directly involved in policy execution; and supporting actors, including academics, Minangkabau traditional leaders, and NGOs engaged in child protection issues. To gather data comprehensively, this research employs three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews with key actors are conducted to explore their perceptions of the policy and how they adapt the KLA policy in everyday practice. Second, document studies will analyze various regulations related to

KLA (including Regional Regulation No. 12 of 2019), evaluation reports, and other strategic documents outlining government efforts to implement the policy. Lastly, participatory observation is carried out, especially in the Children's Forum activities, PUSPAGA services, and the Child-Friendly School program. This approach allows the researcher to directly engage and better understand the dynamics on the ground.

The data collected will be analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman's (1994) technique. The analysis process involves three main steps: data reduction, where relevant and important information is filtered to focus on the research's objectives; data presentation, where the data is organized in a way that is easy to understand for further analysis; and conclusion drawing, where patterns and themes are identified to provide relevant insights. The interpretation of the data will be linked to the policy transfer theory (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Grindle, 1991), with an emphasis on three main dimensions: the actors involved in the policy transfer process, the form and content of the policy being transferred, and the factors that both hinder and encourage the adaptation of the policy in the local context. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings, the validity of the data will be maintained through triangulation of sources, which includes interviews, documentation, and observations. The findings will also be cross-checked (member checking) with key informants to ensure clarity and accuracy. Additionally, an audit trail will be maintained, documenting the systematic process of analysis, allowing the reader to trace the analytical steps taken throughout the research. With this approach, the research aims to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Child-Friendly City policy transfer in Padang and offer insights for the development of more contextual and sustainable policies.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Finding**

This study reveals that while the process of transferring and adapting the Child-Friendly City (KLA) policy in Padang occurs within a strong formal framework, there are substantial challenges in its execution. Five key variables affect the effectiveness of implementing the KLA policy as it transitions from global agendas to local practices: disparities in child participation, low parenting literacy, limited budgets and infrastructure, inadequate school preparedness, and low digital literacy. Each of these variables reflects the local readiness to absorb and translate transferred policies.

### **Disparities in Child Participation in the Children's Forum**

The Children's Forum is a strategic pillar in the Child-Friendly City

initiative, designed as a platform for children's participation in development processes and public decision-making (KPPPA, 2021). Its existence is critical in ensuring children's rights to freedom of expression and voicing their opinions in policies that affect their lives. According to the Child-Friendly Cities Framework (UNICEF, 2018), children's participation should not be limited to formal involvement, but should be meaningful, inclusive, and considerate of children's social and cultural backgrounds.

In Padang, institutional structures for the Children's Forum have been established at the city and sub-district levels. However, participation from marginalized areas, such as Bungus Teluk Kabung, remains minimal. In some neighborhoods, there is a lack of institutional support for the Forum, resulting in the voices of children from marginalized communities being frequently overlooked in the development of regional programs. Children commonly replace their aspirations with more politically and technologically accessible central areas. This disparity reflects a form of participation that is more symbolic and elitist in nature.

Moreover, this phenomenon suggests a limited sense of ownership of the policy among local communities. The success of participatory policies depends on their ability to reach marginalized groups, whether due to geographic, economic, or cultural factors (Gready & Ensor, 2005). Without institutionalizing the Children's Forum at the village level and providing adequate capacity support, children's participation remains a symbolic tool used solely to fulfill administrative indicators of a Child-Friendly City.

### **Low Parenting Literacy and the Stigma Around Counseling**

The Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) is one of the strategic programs within the Child-Friendly City policy aimed at strengthening families as the primary environment for child-rearing. However, in Padang, the implementation of PUSPAGA faces significant cultural and structural barriers. Many parents, especially those from low-education backgrounds, still view parenting in a materialistic way, focusing only on fulfilling physical needs like food and clothing. The emotional and two-way communication aspect between parents and children has not been deemed necessary. Furthermore, counseling services are still seen as taboo and only for families in trouble, leading to social resistance in accessing PUSPAGA.

Without a dialogical process between global norms and local values, policies risk being rejected socially and culturally. PUSPAGA represents an example of policy content that has been transferred but without accompanying paradigm shifts at the community level. According to UNICEF (2021), successful parenting interventions cannot be separated from social communication strategies and local community involvement in designing

services. Without collective awareness and efforts to eliminate the stigma surrounding counseling, the safe space offered by PUSPAGA will not be optimally utilized, especially by families who need it most.

Therefore, the adaptation of the PUSPAGA policy requires more than just the provision of services; it also demands a systematic approach to cultural and social education. Failure to ground the concept of "positive parenting" within local value systems, such as adat basandi syarak and syarak basandi Kitabullah, may become a significant obstacle to the sustainable internalization of child protection policies.

### **Budget and Infrastructure Limitations in PAMSIMAS**

The Community-Based Drinking Water and Sanitation Program (PAMSIMAS) is one of the instruments for fulfilling children's fundamental rights in the health and welfare cluster. This program is designed to increase access to clean water and proper sanitation services, especially in areas not served by city distribution systems. However, the primary issue lies in the low prioritization of the water supply sector in local government budgets, which competes with more politically visible physical infrastructure projects. Additionally, coordination between regional agencies such as the Public Works and Housing Department (Dinas PUPR), the Health Department, and Bappeda has yet to be integrated into the planning and monitoring of this program. This condition indicates limitations in the structural capacity of the local government, particularly in fiscal allocation and cross-sector governance.

### **Lack of Preparedness and School Safety**

The Child-Friendly School (SRA) program is a crucial component of the Child-Friendly City policy, aiming to create a safe and inclusive educational environment that supports optimal child development. The program is designed to protect children from all forms of violence, discrimination, and environmental risks that could harm their physical and psychosocial well-being (KPPPA, 2021). Ideally, schools should become a second safe space after the family, where children feel fully protected.

However, the implementation of SRA in Padang remains far from ideal. Disaster education has not been incorporated into the local curriculum as a mandatory subject, despite Padang being an area at high risk for earthquakes. Emergency response training is sporadic and does not cover all schools, especially in peripheral regions. Counseling services for children are minimal, and most schools lack standard operating procedures (SOPs) for handling violence, including bullying, which often occurs covertly.

This situation demonstrates that the Child-Friendly School policy is being implemented administratively, focusing on formal indicators, but has yet to address the substantive aspects of child protection. The top-down approach

to implementing SRA also fails to involve teachers and students in a participatory manner, meaning the policy is enforced through formal structures without meaningful engagement from school actors.

### **Low Digital Literacy and Weak Service Integration in SiLaras**

SiLaras (Child-Friendly Service and Complaint System Based on Digital Technology) was developed as a technological innovation to support child protection through online violence reporting, ensuring anonymity, easy access, and data protection for reporters. This system plays a crucial role in the special protection cluster within the Child-Friendly City policy, providing technical support for the principles of non-discrimination, confidentiality, and accessibility (KPPPA, 2022).

However, in Padang, the utilization of SiLaras has not been optimal. Many children, primarily from peripheral communities and families with low educational backgrounds, are unaware of the existence or usage of this app. Digital literacy remains low, and not all schools or neighborhoods have adequate devices or support. Socialization of the app is often limited to ceremonial activities without continuous practical training.

Moreover, the integration of SiLaras with other service systems, such as schools, PUSPAGA, the police, and psychosocial services, remains weak. The verification of reports is still often done manually, and it is not connected to an effective monitoring system. In some cases, responses to reports are delayed due to the lack of integrated digital protocols between institutions.

In the context of policy transfer, the weak institutional adaptation and minimal involvement of local communities in redesigning the system have led to this technology failing to function as an empowerment tool for children. As Grindle (1991) notes, the success of digital policies is highly dependent on their implementation context. Without awareness of the structural and digital cultural gaps, technology will merely be an "added layer" that appears modern but lacks support from the social system.

These five variables collectively illustrate that the implementation of the Child-Friendly City policy in Padang does not fully represent the successful adaptation of global policies in a local context. While the formal structure, regulations, and programs are in place, their execution still faces substantial challenges, ranging from non-inclusive participation and cultural resistance to limitations in infrastructure and digital capacity. These findings reveal a gap between administrative success and social reality, as well as between policy design and its local acceptance. From a policy transfer perspective, this situation indicates that the process of transferring the KLA policy in Padang has been partial and symbolic, without thorough institutional, cultural, and capacity adjustments. The participatory values, protection, and accessibility that form

the core of global policies have not been fully internalized in local practices. As Grindle (1991) reminds us, adopting a policy without reconceptualizing it to fit local social and cultural structures results in policies that lose their substantive meaning. Therefore, the implementation of the KLA in Padang should be understood not just as the execution of programs, but as a social process involving value negotiation, meaning formation, and policy re-contextualization in the local arena. This emphasizes the importance of comprehensively building local capacity so that the policy transfer process does not end as mere imitation, but as a transformation rooted in the needs and conditions of the local community.

## Discussion

As outlined by Hart (1992) in his theory of the “Ladder of Children’s Participation,” the current situation can be categorized as tokenism, where children’s involvement is merely formal, offering no real influence on decision-making. This is further supported by Widianita’s (2023) findings, which highlight that the Children’s Forum in Padang functions more as an administrative reporting tool rather than a platform for advocacy based on the real needs of children. From a policy transfer perspective, this disparity reflects a transfer process that lacks institutional adaptation at the grassroots level (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). While the concept of children’s participation has been transferred from global standards, its internalization does not resonate with the local socio-cultural and spatial dimensions. Instead of becoming a democratic space, the Children’s Forum risks turning into an exclusive platform that exacerbates the gap between urban and peripheral areas.

This phenomenon exemplifies how a policy can be transferred but fail to connect with local realities, reinforcing the notion of superficial participation. Hart’s theory underscores that without meaningful engagement and real decision-making power, participation can become an empty gesture, further entrenching societal inequalities rather than fostering an inclusive environment. The Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA), designed to provide education, counseling, and support to parents in implementing positive, violence-free parenting patterns (KPPPA, 2020), faces cultural and structural barriers in Padang. Fariz’s (2023) study highlights the significant challenge posed by a limited understanding of alternative parenting methods in fulfilling children’s rights in Padang. This demonstrates a gap between the transferred policy standard and the cultural readiness of the receiving community.

From a policy transfer perspective, this situation reflects a distortion in the adaptation of policy. As Grindle (1991) explains, policies adopted from external contexts are often reinterpreted when they interact with local values

and norms. In the context of the Child-Friendly City policy, PUSPAGA endorses the principle of a healthy environment as part of the rights guaranteed to children by both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and national regulations (Kemenkes RI, 2021). However, without a paradigm shift in local culture, such policies may not resonate fully with the community.

The lack of awareness and resistance to the concept of alternative parenting, particularly in more traditional or lower-education communities, further complicates the successful adoption of this program. As noted by UNICEF (2021), successful parenting interventions depend heavily on social communication strategies and local community involvement in designing services. Without collective awareness and efforts to eliminate the stigma around counseling, the benefits of PUSPAGA will not be fully realized, particularly among families who need them most.

In terms of policy adaptation, the implementation of PUSPAGA requires more than just service provision; it demands systematic cultural and social education approaches. Suppose the concept of "positive parenting" is not embedded in the local value system, such as *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*. In that case, it may present a significant barrier to the sustainable internalization of child protection policies. The Community-Based Drinking Water and Sanitation Program (PAMSIMAS) is an important instrument for fulfilling children's fundamental rights in the health and welfare sector. This program aims to enhance access to clean water and proper sanitation services, particularly in underserved areas. However, in Padang, the implementation of PAMSIMAS is still uneven. Many peripheral areas, such as Lubuk Kilangan and Bungus Teluk Kabung, still lack access to clean water.

This aligns with the findings of Katili et al. (2023), which suggest that the success of community-based clean water programs heavily depends on budget support and robust inter-agency coordination. From a policy transfer perspective, this situation reflects institutional constraints that often hinder the successful transfer of policies from central to local levels (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000)—the lack of affirmative policies that direct funding schemes toward marginalized children further widens the access gap. Without a perspective of spatial and social justice in planning, programs like PAMSIMAS may exacerbate structural inequalities between regions. Access to clean water has broad implications for children's rights to health, education, and overall quality of life (UNICEF, 2019). From a policy adaptation standpoint, this situation illustrates that sufficient institutional adjustments at the local level have not accompanied the PAMSIMAS transfer process. The policy, transferred from the national level, is being applied administratively without adjustments to Padang's geographical and socio-economic realities. As Grindle (1991) suggests,

failing to adapt policies to local structures can lead to fragmented implementation, where the policy becomes a “project” rather than a sustainable service system.

In this case, the transfer of PAMSIMAS can be considered superficial, as global policies are transferred without the necessary internalization of values or local conceptualization (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). The implementation of the Child-Friendly School (SRA) program, which aims to create a safe, inclusive educational environment to support children’s optimal development, is another key area of concern. However, the SRA program in Padang is far from ideal. Disaster education is not part of the mandatory local curriculum, despite Padang being in an earthquake-prone area. Emergency response training is sporadic and has not reached all schools, especially in peripheral areas. Moreover, children’s counseling services are minimal, and most schools lack standard operating procedures (SOPs) for handling violence, including bullying.

This situation demonstrates that the SRA policy is being implemented from an administrative standpoint, focusing on formal indicators, but has not yet addressed the substantive aspects of child protection. As noted by Fitriani and Istaryatiningtias (2020), the implementation of SRA in many regions in Indonesia often becomes entangled in administrative reporting, while parental involvement, psychosocial protection systems, and cross-sector coordination remain suboptimal. From Grindle’s (1991) perspective, this failure points to a lack of recontextualization—an adaptation of policy values and practices to local conditions. Schools, as social entities, require not only policy instructions but also organizational cultural support, teacher training, and adaptive institutional relationships. Without a transformative approach, the SRA policy risks becoming a “label without substance” that fails to ensure children’s safety and well-being in educational settings.

This situation highlights incomplete transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000), where technological innovations, as products of policy, are transferred to the local level without accompanying capacity-building and adequate supporting infrastructure. The “top-down” technology in SiLaras has failed to ground itself in the local social realities, where digital access is limited and face-to-face services are still heavily relied upon. According to UNICEF (2021), successful digital child protection systems require three key elements: user literacy, institutional support, and service integration. Without these, digital innovations risk widening the service gap between digitally literate and non-literate communities. This is further exacerbated by the absence of a digital equity framework in local policy design, which means systems like SiLaras can only be accessed by specific segments of society.

## CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the implementation of the Child-Friendly City (KLA) policy in Padang represents a process of global policy transfer that has not fully grounded itself within the local social and institutional context. While Padang has earned the "Main Category KLA" status administratively, this achievement does not reflect the substantive quality of child protection on the ground. Five key variables were identified—disparities in children's participation, low parenting literacy and counseling stigma, limited budgets and infrastructure, insufficient school preparedness, and low digital literacy and weak service integration—all pointing to a misalignment between global standards and local readiness. The transferred policy focuses more on formal and administrative aspects. At the same time, the Minangkabau social and cultural context, local institutional structures, and community capacity have yet to be fully accommodated in the adaptation process.

From a policy transfer perspective, these findings highlight a partial and symbolic transfer, which can even distort the original intent. The transfer process fails not only on a technical level but also in social and cultural dimensions, as outlined by Dolowitz & Marsh (2000) and Grindle (1991). Adopting a policy without the necessary re-contextualization of values and without strengthening institutions and ensuring meaningful participation risks turning the global policy into a mere formality rather than a transformative practice. This conclusion highlights that the success of policy transfer is not determined solely by administrative compliance but rather heavily depends on the region's ability to adapt, interpret, and ground the policy in its local social context. Thus, the implementation of the Child-Friendly City policy in Padang requires a transformative approach that is not only technocratic but also value-based, participatory, and adaptive to local dynamics.

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