

## The Protection of Children's Health Rights from the Perspectives of Islamic Health Jurisprudence and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah as a Foundation for Stunting Prevention

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### ABSTRACT

Stunting is a severe child health problem that has an impact on physical growth, cognitive development and the quality of human resources. This challenge is not limited to the medical sphere but also involves the realisation of children's basic rights, including their rights to health, nourishment, adequate care and protection. This paper intends to discuss stunting in the perspective of Islamic health jurisprudence through the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, namely the protection of life (*hifẓ al-nafs*), progeny (*hifẓ al-nasl*), and intellect (*hifẓ al-aql*). The study is qualitative in nature and uses a library-based methodology where Islamic jurisprudential literature, principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and pertinent scientific materials on stunting were analysed. The examination deals with the link between parental responsibilities, social obligations and the role of the state in satisfying children's basic needs. The results showed that stunting prevention is in accordance to the aims of Islamic law in preserving life, progeny and intelligence. So, the fulfilment of the fundamental rights of children is a collective obligation, which demands an integrated approach covering health, social welfare and religious viewpoints.



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## INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a public health problem that impacts the long-term physical growth, cognitive development, and quality of life of children. It is a height-for-age measurement of less than the typical growth guideline for children of the same age. (Fadmi, F. R., Kuntoro, K., Otok, B. W., Melaniani, S., & Mulyani, S. (2024). Chronic undernutrition, especially in early children, is connected with stunting, as are other factors such as maternal health, caregiving habits, socioeconomic situations, sanitation and access to health services. The repercussions of this are not only related to physical growth, but also the learning skills of children and their productivity in adulthood. Thus, stunting is a complex problem associated with health, social welfare, child protection and the responsibility of the state to provide proper care and satisfy the basic needs of every kid. (D. Azriani, Masita, N.S. Qinthara, I.N. Yulita, D. Agustian, Y. Zuhairini and M. Dhamayanti, 2024).

Prevention of stunting is one of the primary priorities in the national health development in Indonesia. Various dietary improvement programmes and health treatments have been adopted, but continued and integrated efforts are needed to avoid stunting. These efforts need to go beyond nutritional supplementation and medical treatment and must encompass maternal nutrition in pregnancy, exclusive breastfeeding, proper complementary feeding, child growth monitoring, improved sanitation and greater family awareness of child health. Research on stunting and children's rights shows that this issue is also intimately related to children's rights to survival, growth and optimal development. (E.S.O. Patriota, L.C.S. Abrantes, A. C. M. G Figueiredo, N. Pizato, G. Buccini and

V.S.S. Gonçalves, 2024). So, the prevention of stunting should be looked at in a broader context of the realisation of the fundamental rights of children, not as a technical public health intervention.

In Islam, honouring the basic rights of children is intimately linked to the obligations of parents, the community and governments to protect life and the welfare of future generations. (I. Jauhari, Z.H. Thaib, M. Jafar, T.A. Bahar, M. Jamil, M. Yusuf and Z. Dahlan, 2023). Children have the right to proper care, enough nourishment, proper upbringing and protection from conditions that risk their health and development. The concepts can be explored by the Islamic health jurisprudence (*fiqh al-ṣiḥḥah*) that deals with health issues from the Islamic legal sources, jurisprudential principles, and considerations of human welfare. From this perspective, stunting prevention is conceptualised as not only a health intervention with biological advantages, but also a normative responsibility related with the preservation of life and prevention of harm. This method sets the stage for use of Islamic jurisprudence to better comprehend children's right to proper nutrition and health care. (C.U. Azami, S.A. Fara, R.A. Hafidz and M. Amiruddin, 2025).

One conceptual framework relevant in creating this analysis is *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. The *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* refers to the purposes of the Islamic law to realise human wellbeing and prevent damage. Specifically, protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*) when stunting prevention means ensuring dietary needs, preventing sickness, and access to healthcare services. (A.S. Hamzah, L. Husni and Arba, 2026). The protection of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) is linked to the duty to protect the well-being of future generations and to provide children with the conditions for healthy growth and development. The safeguarding of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), in contrast, is concerned with the facilitation of cognitive development through good nourishment, health care and caring. The three concepts provide a normative basis to see stunting prevention as an attempt to protect life, inter-generational well-being, and the intellectual development of children. (R.F. Ayu and Kamsi, 2022).

Previous research have explored the relevance of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* on stunting prevention and child welfare. Khoiri (2022) An Analysis of Al-Shatibi's *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* Legal Theory on the Role of Higher Education Institutions in Addressing Stunting in Indonesia) used a normative qualitative approach based on library research. (N. Khoiri, 2022). The study revealed that the role of higher education institutions in stunting prevention can be seen as the realisation of public welfare, especially in defending life, offspring, intelligence, religion, and wealth. The research presents a theoretical basis for the application of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* in stunting prevention programmes, with a major emphasis on the role of higher education institutions. (M.N. Alias, M.N. Abdullah, M.S. Kamis, A.J. Afandi and N. Alias, 2024).

Another research was undertaken by Haeruddin et al. (2025) in an article entitled *Maqasid al-Syariah as a Framework for Religious Affairs Offices' Role in Stunting Prevention*. The study discussed the implementation of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a basis for optimising the function of Religious Affairs Offices in stunting prevention. It emphasised the significance of religious organisations in assisting education and prevention programmes through an approach based on Islamic values. (H. Haeruddin, M. Jannah, M. Djakat, D. Kasim and S. Jamaluddin, 2025). Meanwhile, Muttazimah, Talli, and Suhufi investigated exclusive breastfeeding as a technique to avoid stunting from the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* with an emphasis on policy implementation in Makassar City. Their investigation found that exclusive breastfeeding practices were associated with the protection of life, intelligence and progeny. These studies contribute to the understanding of how Islamic legal concepts might inform child health programmes, particularly the engagement of religious institutions and behaviours that encourage nutritional adequacy. (Muttazimah, A.H. Talli, and M. Suhufi, 2022).

Abolaji and Muda (2018) also explored the protection of children's health rights in their essay entitled *Maqasid Al-Shari'ah: A Pathway for Protecting Children's Right to Health*. The study investigated children's health rights from the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, including needs at the levels of *ḍarūriyyāt* (necessities), *ḥājīyyāt* (complementary requirements), and *taḥsīniyyāt* (embellishments). (A.T. Abolaji and Muda, F.S Ismail, 2018). The writers highlighted the significance of the application of the aims of the Islamic law to assist the physical health and mental growth of children. Furthermore, the research of Nurjanah et al. (2025) entitled *Children's Rights in Islamic Law: A Contemporary Study of Family Practices* explored the fulfilment of children's rights in families by considering the views of Islamic jurisprudence and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. The study revealed that the protection of life, progeny, intellect, religion and wealth are normative underpinnings for the realisation of children's rights. Both studies offer a conceptual platform for the analysis of children's health rights,

but neither discusses particularly the linkages between stunting, Islamic health jurisprudence, and the realisation of children's basic rights. (S. Nurjanah, A. Syarifudin, M.M. Baidhowi, E. Mahmudi and H. Darussalam, 2025).

This review is the conceptual basis of the present study in which Islamic health jurisprudence, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and fulfilment of the basic rights of children were integrated into the analysis of stunting. This study, contrasted to prior research that have focused on the roles of religious organisations and higher education institutions or on exclusive breastfeeding practices, locates children's fundamental rights as the site of convergence between normative Islamic legal reasoning and public health concerns. The examination covers the relationship between the protection of life, offspring and intelligence and the children's rights to health care, nutrition, proper care and protection. It also reflects on the duties of parents, communities and the State in the realisation of these rights according to the notion of public welfare. (A. Haque, N.H. Abd Manaf, M.N. Uddin, N. Akther A. Mokhtar, 2024).

The originality of this article is in analytical synthesis of the objectives of Islamic law and the substantive dimensions of children's rights within the framework of stunting prevention, not in claiming that the relationship between stunting and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* has not been studied before. (N. Falah, 2026). The study aims to analyse stunting from the perspective of Islamic health jurisprudence under the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* considering these issues, to determine the relevance of protecting life, progeny and intellect in realising children's basic rights and to describe the responsibilities of families, communities and the state in preventing stunting. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the interdisciplinary body of Islamic legal literature, especially the creation of Islamic jurisprudence that addresses the challenges of public health and child protection issues. In practice, the findings can be used as a reference for medical workers, families, religious organisations and policy makers to formulate stunting prevention initiatives that consider medical, social and normative aspects. This perspective allows to interpret the fulfilment of children's rights to health and nutrition as a collective obligation to promote human wellbeing and ensure children's optimal growth and development. (A.R. Rahman and Z. Arranury, 2026).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the qualitative research method with the normative legal and the conceptual approach. (E.S. Barry, J. Merkebu and L. Varpio, 2022). The normative-juridical approach investigates the principles of Islamic law, legislation, and policies connected to stunting prevention and the realisation of children's basic rights. The conceptual method examines the issue based on the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, particularly the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), the protection of progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and the protection of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*). The population of the research consists of Islamic legal sources, literature on Islamic health jurisprudence, scholarly papers and policy documents related to the research theme. The research sample or subjects are picked by purposive sampling in which sources are purposefully selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the study problem. The literature reviewed consists of The Qur'an, hadith, traditional Islamic jurisprudence books, scholarly fatwas, statutory rules, health policy papers and academic journal articles. The data collection is done via library research and documentary analysis by the review, recording and classification of information relating to the subject of this research. (F. Nyimbili and L. Nyimbili, (2024). Data collection is analysed by qualitative descriptive analysis with data reduction, categorisation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing by content analysis. The analysis relates normative findings to the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* to uncover ways to defend the fundamental rights of children, including the rights to health, proper nutrition, survival and optimal growth and development. The findings will provide an in-depth overview of the importance of Islamic health jurisprudence in increasing the duties of families, communities, and governments in fulfilling children's rights and supporting sustainable stunting prevention efforts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stunting is a complex public health problem, which affects the physical growth, the cognitive development, the quality of life and the long-term human capital of children. Stunting is described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as impeded linear growth, defined as height-for-age more than two standard deviations below the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards. This illness is often related to chronic undernutrition, recurrent infections, and poor practices of caregiving and

environmental sanitation. (A.D. Laksono, R.D. Wulandari, N. Amaliah and R.W. Wisnuwardani, 2022). From the view of Islamic health law (*fiqh al-sihhah*), stunting is not only a biological consequence of the lack of dietary intake. It is more than that: it is a broader issue about moral, social and legal obligations to protect children's basic rights. Children have rights in Islamic law and ethics. Children are entitled to protection, health care, proper diet and environment that would facilitate their healthy growth and development. (A. Nurrahmadya, 2026).

The conceptual analysis shows there are three elements in the stunting case, which are health-related considerations, family responsibilities, and broader social duties. Together, these factors highlight that stunting prevention and management requires an integrated approach that addresses both individual situations and structural determinants of health.

Chart 1. Dimensions of Stunting from the Perspective of Islamic Health Jurisprudence

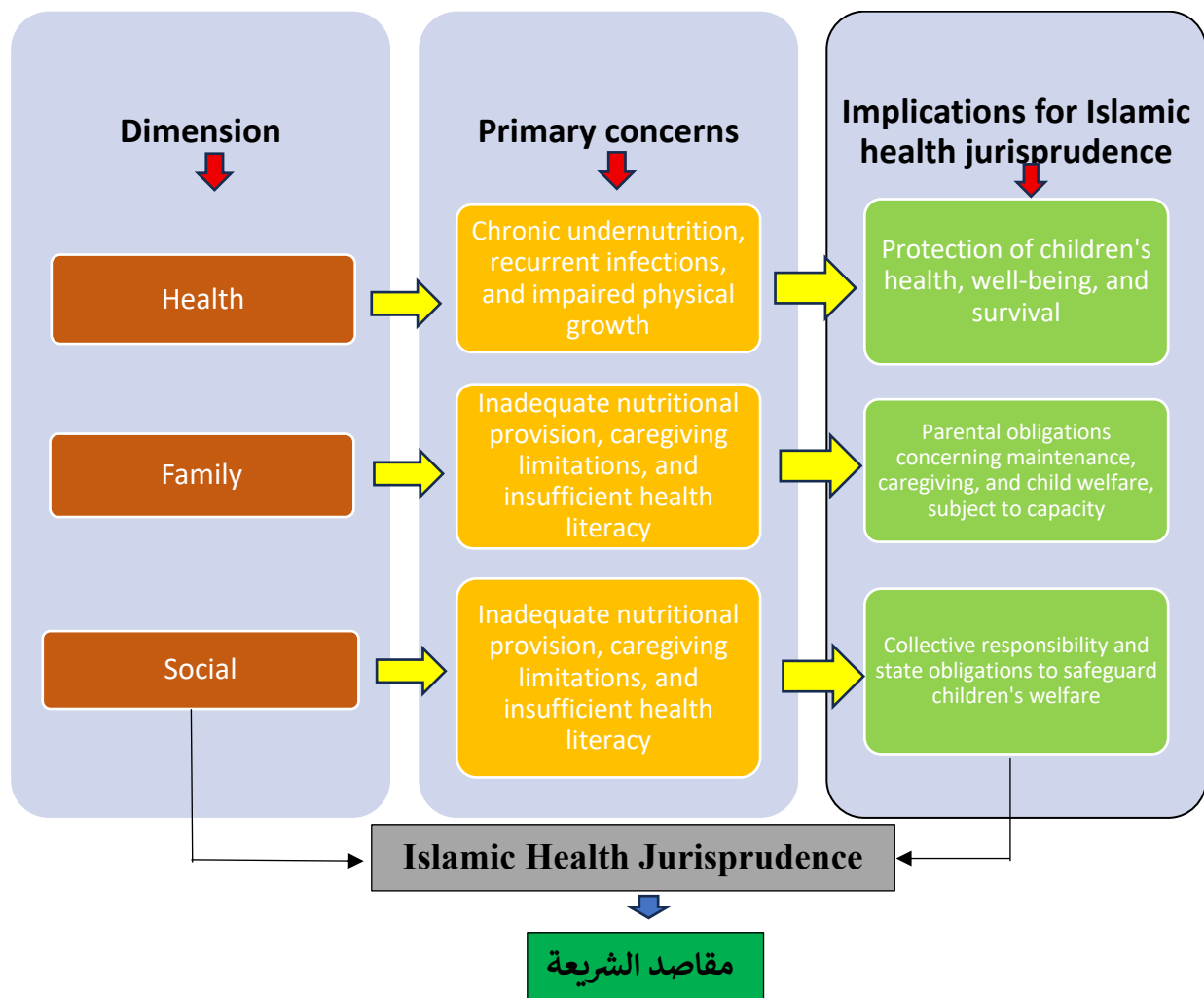


Chart 1 shows that stunting is not only an issue of individual behaviour or parental carelessness. Socioeconomic inequalities, poor access to healthy foods, poor sanitation and the unequal distribution of healthcare mean that children are particularly vulnerable to nutritional problems. Therefore, Islamic health jurisprudence gives a normative guidance in interpreting the prevention of stunting as a joint obligation of the family, community and government entities. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is a term used to refer to the higher purposes of the Islamic law that emphasise on achieving human wellbeing (*maṣlahah*) and preventing harm (*mafsadah*). Classical Islamic legal study specifies five basic objectives: the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). The present research suggests that the prevention of stunting is closely related to

the preservation of life, intelligence and progeny, while the preservation of wealth and religion provides supplementary normative foundations.

Table 2. Analysis of Stunting Prevention Based on the Objectives of Islamic Law

| Maqāṣid principle | Relevance to stunting                                                | Practical implementation                                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ḥifẓ al-nafs      | Safeguarding children's health and survival                          | Adequate nutrition, immunization, and healthcare services           |
| Ḥifẓ al-ʿaql      | Supporting children's cognitive development                          | Appropriate nutrition and early childhood developmental stimulation |
| Ḥifẓ al-nasl      | Ensuring the well-being of future generations                        | Maternal and child healthcare and responsive caregiving             |
| Ḥifẓ al-māl       | Protecting household economic welfare                                | Social protection and nutritional assistance                        |
| Ḥifẓ al-dīn       | Strengthening religious and ethical responsibilities toward children | Family education and community-based social support                 |

First, *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, or preservation of life, emphasises the need to protect human health and survival. Adequate dietary intake is an important step to prevent stunting since chronic undernutrition can heighten children's vulnerability to illness and affect their growth. This rule is congruent with Qur'an 2:195, which bans subjecting oneself to destruction. The passage does not directly address stunting, but the ethical idea behind it promotes preventive treatments that try to reduce preventable harm.

Second, *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*, or the protection of intellect, relates to the maintenance and cultivation of the human mental faculties. Nutritional deficits in early childhood may have negative effects on cognitive development particularly when combined with poor caregiving and severe environmental situations. Hence, adequate nutrition and age-appropriate developmental stimulation can be seen as not simply a public health intervention, but also an Islamic legal purpose of preserving intellectual capacity.

Third, the notion of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of progeny) provides a normative basis for protecting the welfare of future generations. Qur'an 4:9 emphasises the value of being concerned for vulnerable descendants, thereby underlining the need of intergenerational responsibility. In the current context of child health, this notion is the basis for maternal health care, breastfeeding, adequate complementary nutrition and responsive caregiving as key components for the physical and developmental health of children.

Fourth, *ḥifẓ al-māl* or protection of wealth is related to the socioeconomic factors of stunting. Financial barriers may inhibit households from accessing nutritious food, safe drinking water, and necessary health care services. Conversely, childhood stunting may lead to long-term economic disadvantages through its links with poor health and lower human capital. Thus social protection, food assistance and equitable financing of health care can be viewed as vehicles for enhancing economic welfare and child health.

Lastly, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, or the preservation of religion, gives an ethical basis to enhance the obligations of parents, community and government. The protection of children is a moral trust in Islam, including their material provision and moral accountability. However, the connection between stunting and *ḥifẓ al-dīn* is quite indirect, whereas the safeguarding of life, intellect and progeny has a more direct conceptual association. Understanding this distinction is vital if you want to avoid overstating the relevance of individual *maqāṣid* categories. (Duhriah, Fauzi Yati and Addiarrahman, 2026).

The connection between stunting prevention and Islamic health jurisprudence can be further elaborated by the established Islamic legal principle *al-ḍarar yuzāl*, which means that harm must be

eliminated. This maxim provides a normative rationale for the prevention and treatment of conditions that harm the health and development of children. At the home level, providing for the fundamental requirements of children is intimately linked to Islamic ideals of financial upkeep (*nafaqah*) and caregiving. The parent child connection Qur'an 2:233 sets down the duties of breastfeeding and financial maintenance. This verse shows that fulfilling children's basic needs is a recognised responsibility in the Islamic law.

Such obligations, however, must be understood in a proportionate way. It may not be seen that all stunting cases constitute proof of parental neglect or transgression of religious precepts. Poverty, disease, lack of access to healthcare, and larger structural inequities may severely impair families' ability to offer appropriate care. Any jurisprudential assessment, therefore, must take into account the capabilities, resources, knowledge, and contextual situations of the parents. At the societal and governmental levels, *maṣlahah 'āmmah*, or public welfare, offers normative justification for extensive stunting prevention initiatives. Maternal and child health care services, nutritional education, improved sanitation, and targeted food aid to vulnerable households are actions that are in line with the greater aims of Islamic law. (M.A. Rizal, H. Hannani, S.A. Pradana, R. Basri and M. Nurhidayat, 2026).

Islamic health jurisprudence thus calls for moving away from an individualistic view of stunting to a rights-based approach with collective duties. Children's rights are not just about food; they also mean access to health care, good conditions for living, proper caregiving, and consistent support for growth. The results of this conceptual analysis are similar to the findings of Beal et al. (2018) who identified multiple determinants of childhood stunting in Indonesia, including household socioeconomic conditions, maternal education, breastfeeding practices, birth-related factors, sanitation and access to health care. Their results confirm the idea of stunting as a multifaceted phenomena that requires interventions beyond nutritional supplements alone.

This is also supported by a comprehensive review and meta-analysis of 17 research including 642,596 participants in Indonesia. Childhood stunting was significantly associated with household food insecurity, quality of drinking water, sanitation and conditions surrounding birth. Household food insecurity was related with a pooled odds ratio of 2.00 and inadequate drinking water sources with an odds ratio of 1.42. The findings offer empirical evidence for the importance of socioeconomic protection and environmental health in defending children's fundamental rights. But there is a crucial difference between the earlier epidemiological studies and the current analysis. While epidemiological research is concerned with quantitative risk factors and statistical relationships, the present study analyses these variables within the normative framework of Islamic jurisprudence. This divergence does not suggest contradicting conclusions, but rather the complementing contributions of empirical public health research and Islamic legal-ethical thinking.

The 2025 Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates, issued by UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank show that globally around 150.2 million children under-five years of age were stunted in 2024, corresponding to about 23.2% of the world's population in this age group. These findings show the continuing scale of childhood stunting and emphasise the significance of coordinated institutional interventions. The main contribution of this study is the integration of public health evidence with the normative goals of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. In this context, the prevention of stunting is not just an intervention to enhance anthropometric indices, but also an ethical and jurisprudential responsibility for the protection of life, intellect and future generations. This perspective provides a supplementary basis for the development of child-centred health policies based on social justice, societal responsibility and the equal realisation of basic rights.

The analysis also shows that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* can be used as an evaluative framework to analyse the ethical features of public health treatments. (C.I. Rangkuti, S. Sukiati and R.S. Siregar, 2024). We can look at policies that relate to maternal nutrition, family food security, cleanliness, and access to health care to see how they can prevent harm and promote the well-being of children. But this normative paradigm does not replace empirical evaluation of intervention effectiveness. It does not, rather, offer an ethical rationale for preferring interventions that have demonstrated advantages from good scientific evidence. To summarise, these data suggest that the solution for childhood stunting involves integration of scientific knowledge with Islamic ethical standards and institutional accountability. This incorporation can strengthen the conceptual underpinning of Islamic health jurisprudence and can facilitate a broader understanding of children's rights within the framework of contemporary public health discourse.

## CONCLUSION

This study, by investigating Islamic health jurisprudence (*fiqh al-ṣiḥḥah*) and examining *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, argues that stunting is not only a public health and nutritional problem, but also a fundamental problem relating to the fulfilment of children's basic rights, with religious, social and humanitarian implications. According to Islamic law, stunting prevention is an important effort to realise human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*) that might have an impact on the physical, cognitive, and social development of children. The findings indicate that stunting prevention and management are intimately linked with three main aims of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, namely, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (preservation of life), *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect), and *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of progeny). They stress that sufficient nourishment, available health care, suitable care and a healthy environment are basic rights that must be protected. It is first and foremost the responsibility of the parents but the communities and the governments share the responsibility for providing equitable support and healthcare. In addition, Islamic health jurisprudence believes that the prevention of stunting is a community obligation that includes Islamic ethical values, as well as preventative and promotive healthcare practices. These efforts should be initiated prior to conception and sustained throughout pregnancy and early infancy through nutritional interventions, family education, and increased access to health care. Stunting prevention and resolution is a real manifestation of the purpose of Islamic law in protecting human dignity and future generations. An strategy based on *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provides an ethical and normative basis for the development of holistic, equitable and sustainable child health policies that take into account children's basic rights, and lead to healthier, more resilient and wealthier future generations.

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