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The National Single Socio-Economic Data (DTSEN) and the Targeting Accuracy of Social Assistance
Challenges of Data Updating at the Regional Level

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Abstract

Inaccurate targeting of social assistance is a longstanding problem in Indonesia's social protection policy. The government responded through Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2025 on the National Single Socio-Economic Data (DTSEN), which designates Statistics Indonesia as the single data manager and ranks households into welfare deciles. This study analyzes the institutional architecture of DTSEN, the achievements and problems of targeting accuracy after DTSEN became the basis for social assistance distribution, and the challenges of data updating at the regional level. It employs a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach through analysis of policy documents, official data, and literature. The findings show that DTSEN has improved the composition of beneficiaries, as indicated by 4.33 million new beneficiary families in deciles 1 to 4 and by all recipients of the Family Hope Program and food assistance falling within deciles 1 to 4 in the second quarter of 2026. However, data updating still faces decile anomalies, the limited role of regional and village governments, the risk of excluding groups that are not administratively registered, and the need for data protection. This study recommends participatory updating, a stronger regional verification role, a responsive grievance mechanism, and data security governance.

Keywords: *national single socio-economic data, social assistance, targeting accuracy, data updating, regional government*

INTRODUCTION

Social assistance is one of the state's main instruments for protecting poor and vulnerable groups. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on targeting accuracy. A well-designed program can lose its benefits if assistance is received by those who are not eligible or fails to reach those who need it most. The social policy literature distinguishes two forms of targeting error: inclusion error, when assistance is received by ineligible parties, and exclusion error, when eligible parties do not receive assistance (Coady et al., 2004; Devereux et al., 2017).

In Indonesia, the problem of targeting accuracy is closely related to data fragmentation. For years, ministries and agencies used different databases, so that a family could be recorded as poor in one database but not in another. To address this problem, the President signed Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2025 on the National Single Socio-Economic Data (DTSEN) on 5 February 2025 (DPR RI, 2025). The instruction assigns Statistics Indonesia (BPS) to compile and manage DTSEN, while ministries, agencies, and regional governments assist in updating, verifying, and validating the data (Metro TV News, 2026a).

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Since the second quarter of 2025, social assistance has been distributed using DTSEN. The Ministry of Social Affairs reported that since then, 4,330,417 new beneficiary families in deciles 1 to 4 who previously had not received assistance now receive it, and that in the second quarter of 2026 all recipients of the Family Hope Program (PKH) and food assistance were in deciles 1 to 4 (Metro TV News, 2026b). This achievement shows a significant improvement over the previous period, when around two million inactive identity cards were found still registered as aid recipients (Antara, 2025).

Nevertheless, DTSEN has also given rise to new problems. In August 2026, a number of cases of decile mismatch attracted public attention because families who considered themselves poor were recorded in higher deciles, prompting BPS to carry out field checks and updates (BPS, 2026). Meanwhile, regional and village governments often become the place where people complain about data problems, even though the authority to determine deciles lies with BPS (Ombudsman RI, 2026). The tension between the centralization of data management and the proximity of regional governments to the community is the focus of this study. The study by Rambe et al. (2024) on the tendency towards policy centralization and that by Rambe (2021) on village government capacity serve as the starting points of the analysis. Accordingly, this study formulates three research questions:

1. What is the institutional architecture of DTSEN and the division of roles between the center and the regions?
2. What are the achievements and problems of social assistance targeting accuracy since DTSEN has been used?
3. What are the challenges of data updating at the regional level, and what model can strengthen it?

This study aims to analyze the institutional design of DTSEN, assess the achievements and problems of social assistance targeting accuracy, and formulate a data updating model that involves regional governments and communities more meaningfully.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. The data are secondary, consisting of policy documents, namely Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2025 and BPS Regulation Number 6 of 2025; official social assistance distribution data published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and BPS from 2025 to September 2026; reports of the public service oversight body; and scholarly articles. Aspects of authority and the status of legal instruments were examined using a statutory approach (Tanjung, 2024).

The analytical framework uses social assistance targeting theory, which assesses program performance by the levels of inclusion and exclusion errors (Coady et al., 2004), and street-level bureaucracy theory, which emphasizes the role of frontline workers as the actual implementers of policy in their interactions with citizens (Lipsky, 1980). The data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with triangulation among official data, oversight reports, and academic studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Institutional Architecture of DTSEN and the Division of Roles

DTSEN is built on the principle of one dataset managed by one institution. BPS collects, consolidates, and integrates previously scattered data, then groups families into deciles based on the relative position of their welfare. Decile 1 represents the 10 percent of families with the lowest welfare, decile 2 the next 10 percent, and so on. Ministries and agencies then use deciles as one basis for program targeting, in accordance with the objectives and provisions of each program (BPS, 2026).

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DTSEN data are enriched not only from censuses and surveys but also from the administrative data of other institutions, such as health insurance membership and electricity customer data, as well as from proposals of regional governments, field checks, and community submissions. Citizens can check their status and decile independently through the Cek DTSEN service and request updates. The division of roles in the DTSEN architecture is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Division of Roles in DTSEN Management

Actor	Role	Notes
Statistics Indonesia (BPS)	Compiles and manages DTSEN, including determining welfare deciles	The only party authorized to determine deciles
Ministry of Social Affairs	Uses DTSEN as the basis for distributing PKH, food assistance, and other aid	DTSEN-based distribution since Q2 2025
Other ministries and agencies	Provide administrative data and use DTSEN for their own programs	Examples: scholarship and health insurance programs
Regional governments	Support data updating, verification, and validation; submit correction proposals	Not authorized to determine deciles
Village and urban village governments	Propose data corrections and facilitate field checks	Closest to the community and the main point for complaints
Citizens	Check their status and propose updates independently	Dependent on digital literacy and access to information

Source: Compiled from Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2025 and official releases of BPS and the Ministry of Social Affairs (2025–2026).

This architecture has the advantage of closing opportunities for data discrepancies between institutions and reducing the intervention of local interests in determining beneficiaries. However, centralizing the authority to determine deciles also has consequences. Regional and village governments, which socially know the conditions of residents best, act only as proposers. This tendency is in line with the policy centralization noted by Rambe et al. (2024). In the context of social data, centralization increases consistency but risks reducing sensitivity to welfare dynamics at the local level.

In terms of legal form, DTSEN was established through a presidential instruction, which is essentially an order to the government apparatus. Presidential instructions are effective in mobilizing the bureaucracy but are not designed to regulate the rights and obligations of citizens. Yet DTSEN directly affects citizens' rights to obtain assistance, health insurance, and scholarships. Citizens' rights to know their data, to object, and to obtain corrections should be regulated in a stronger legal instrument, such as a presidential regulation or a law on social welfare, so that they have legal certainty and can be enforced.

2. Achievements and Problems of Targeting Accuracy

Data from the Ministry of Social Affairs show that the use of DTSEN has significantly changed the composition of aid recipients. The development of the inclusion of new beneficiary families in deciles 1 to 4 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. New Beneficiary Families in Deciles 1–4 after the Use of DTSEN

Period	New Beneficiary Families
Q2 2025	1,379,043
Q3 2025	1,696,007
Q1 2026	1,179,506
Q2 2026	56,276
Q3 2026	19,585

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Period	New Beneficiary Families
Total	4,330,417

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs as reported by Metro TV News (2026b).

In addition to new recipients, the number of PKH recipients in deciles 1 to 4 rose from around 8.33 million families in the first quarter of 2025 to 10 million families in the second quarter of 2026, and there are no longer PKH and food assistance recipients outside deciles 1 to 4 (Metro TV News, 2026b). These data show a meaningful reduction in inclusion errors. The declining number of new recipients in 2026 can also be read as a sign that the large-scale data correction process has entered a stable phase.

DTSEN is also used beyond the social assistance programs of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The 2026 Indonesia Smart Card for Higher Education (KIP Kuliah) guidelines, for example, prioritize candidates who are at most in decile 4 of DTSEN, while recipients of health insurance premium assistance are gradually directed to deciles 1 to 4 (Infobank, 2026). This expanding use shows that DTSEN has become a shared reference across programs. Consequently, an error in recording a family's decile affects not just one type of assistance but may close the family's access to several programs at once, from food assistance and health insurance to higher education scholarships.

However, these achievements have not fully addressed the problem of exclusion errors. The decile anomalies that surfaced in August 2026 show that some poor families may be recorded in higher deciles because of outdated data or indicators that do not reflect real conditions. BPS emphasized that deciles are not a single measure of poverty but the relative position of a family's welfare compared with other families, and it provides an updating mechanism (BPS, 2026). The problem is that, for the families concerned, a decile error directly results in the loss of access to assistance, health insurance, or scholarships.

The government recognizes that the measurement of targeting errors needs to be improved. BPS is preparing improvements to the measurement of social assistance distribution errors through the results of the 2026 Economic Census, and a government coordination meeting in May 2026 discussed strengthening accuracy through data updating, the use of big data, and refinement of the beneficiary ranking model (TVRI News, 2026). This step is important because without reliable measurement of exclusion errors, the success of DTSEN tends to be measured only by the reduction of ineligible recipients, while poor families not yet reached remain invisible in the statistics.

The greatest risk of exclusion is faced by groups that are not administratively registered. DTSEN relies on the national identity number as the key for data integration. Families without complete civil registration documents, for example because of unregistered marriages, risk not being reached. Laraszaty et al. (2022) show that civil registration is part of the legal protection of children and families. Therefore, the accuracy of DTSEN cannot be separated from the quality of civil registration services in the regions.

Another problem concerns families near the eligibility threshold. The welfare of vulnerable families can change quickly, for example because of job loss, illness, or disaster. A family recorded in decile 5 may fall into poverty within a short time, yet its data have not been updated. Conversely, a family whose condition has just improved may immediately lose assistance and become vulnerable to falling back into poverty. Therefore, targeting policy needs to be complemented by a transition period or gradual graduation for families leaving the target group, as well as a fast mechanism for including families that experience economic shocks.

3. Challenges of Data Updating at the Regional Level and a Strengthening Model

The first challenge is the tension between authority and social responsibility. In practice, residents who feel disadvantaged by their decile go to the village office or the social affairs office. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia noted that BPS affirms that the authority to determine deciles lies with BPS,

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not with village governments or social affairs offices (Ombudsman RI, 2026). In Central Bangka, for example, DTSEN update proposals reached 3,459 by the end of the second quarter of 2026, showing the heavy burden on regional governments in facilitating data corrections. This situation places regional and village governments in the position of street-level bureaucracies that deal with citizens directly without having decision-making authority (Lipsky, 1980).

The second challenge is the capacity of the apparatus. Data updating requires officers who are trained, disciplined, and have integrity, especially in field checks. Batubara and Rambe (2025) show that work discipline significantly affects employee performance in public organizations, while Armayanti et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of administrative transformation in supporting bureaucratic reform. At the village level, apparatus capacity varies widely, as reflected in Rambe's (2021) study on the authority and administration of village government.

The third challenge is data protection. DTSEN collects highly detailed socio-economic data on hundreds of millions of people and is accessed by many institutions. Large-scale data integration increases the risk of leaks and misuse, including by cybercriminals. Tanjung and Adriani (2022) warn that legal policy for combating cybercrime must anticipate the risks that accompany the digitalization of public services. The digitalization of DTSEN-based social assistance, strengthened since May 2026 (IDX Channel, 2026), needs to be accompanied by strict security standards and access restrictions.

The fourth challenge is community participation and citizens' right to object. Askamaini and Zarzani (2024) emphasize the importance of protecting the rights of village communities in village governance. In the context of DTSEN, these rights include the right to know the status of one's data, the right to object, and the right to receive a response within a reasonable time. The Cek DTSEN mechanism is a step forward, but it still depends on citizens' digital literacy, which is lowest among the poorest groups.

The Aceh context illustrates the importance of local institutions in data updating. In Aceh, gampong (village) governments and customary deliberation bodies have strong social standing and are the main place where residents resolve community matters. These institutions can be used as open verification forums for lists of poor families, so that update proposals submitted to BPS have social legitimacy. Such a local institution-based approach can also be applied in other regions by adjusting to their respective social structures.

Based on these challenges, this study proposes a layered participatory data updating model. The first layer is a village or urban village deliberation forum to verify the list of poor families openly, with the results submitted to BPS as official proposals. The second layer is strengthening the role of district/city social affairs offices as trained verifiers with limited access to DTSEN data in their areas. The third layer is an objection mechanism with clear response deadlines, accessible offline through village offices and online through Cek DTSEN. The fourth layer is data security governance that ensures every access is logged and auditable. This model maintains the consistency of data managed by BPS while drawing on the local knowledge of regional governments and communities.

The model also requires a fair division of workload and financing between the center and the regions. So far, regional governments have borne the burden of handling complaints and facilitating updates without adequate budgetary support. The central government needs to provide financial support and training for regional verifiers, while BPS needs to provide prompt feedback on every update proposal so that regional governments can explain the results to residents. In this way, the centralization of data management does not turn into a centralization of authority that shifts the social burden onto the regions.

CONCLUSION

DTSEN is an important reform in the governance of social protection data in Indonesia. Its use as the basis for distributing social assistance has meaningfully reduced inclusion errors, as marked by the

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entry of 4.33 million new beneficiary families in deciles 1 to 4 and by all PKH and food assistance recipients being in deciles 1 to 4 in the second quarter of 2026. However, centralizing the authority to determine deciles in BPS creates tension with the role of regional and village governments, which are closest to the community, while the risk of exclusion errors, limited apparatus capacity, and the need for data protection remain challenges.

This study recommends a layered participatory data updating model comprising verification through village deliberation, strengthening the role of social affairs offices as verifiers, an objection mechanism with clear response deadlines, and data security governance. The government also needs to strengthen civil registration services so that unregistered groups are not neglected. Further research should empirically measure exclusion errors, including in Aceh Province.

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