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Dynamics and Challenges of Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia

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Abstract: Civil society organizations (CSOs) are key actors in democratic governance and social development in Indonesia. However, the rapid growth in the number of CSOs has not been supported by effective governance, regulation, and institutional development. This study analyzes the dynamics of CSOs in Indonesia from a public policy perspective, with a focus on regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, public perceptions, and the implications of CSO development policies. It employs a qualitative approach based on policy review, drawing on more than 200 documents, including laws and regulations, government reports, internal documents from the Directorate General of Politics and General Government, academic publications, and survey data from research institutions. The findings show that, despite their significant contributions to social services and public participation, CSOs face persistent challenges, including overlapping institutional mandates, weak oversight mechanisms, and ambivalent public perceptions. Comparative analysis suggests that effective CSO governance requires a balance between freedom of association, transparency, and institutional accountability. This study highlights the importance of a more integrated and evidence-based reformulation of community organization development policies, and positions the Directorate General of Politics and General Government (BSKDN) as a key actor in shaping national CSO policy. It also contributes an analytical framework for CSO governance that integrates regulatory, institutional, and public perception dimensions within the broader context of state-civil society relations in Indonesia.

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I. Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are key actors in democratic governance and social development in Indonesia. The existence of civil society organizations (CSOs) reflects the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression guaranteed under Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In practice, CSOs serve as platforms for articulating community aspirations across various domains, including religion, social affairs, education, culture, and politics. They function not only as channels for expressing public needs and interests but also as key actors in the provision of social services and community-based development. Their role is particularly significant in a developing country such as Indonesia, where challenges remain in reaching all segments of society (Astuti, 2019; Dwi Hardianto & Agung Martono, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, the role of CSOs can be understood through the evolution of civil society approaches, which emphasize their contribution to strengthening democratic quality, reducing social tensions, and fostering local cohesion. For example, Asrida et al. (2021), explain that civil society in Indonesia functions not only as a complement to the state in advancing social welfare, but also as a substitute when the state is unable to meet community needs, and as a countervailing force that monitors abuses of power. Another study by Saryam et al. (2024) shows that civil society organizations (CSOs), such as the Wahid Foundation, C-SAVE, and Inklusif Foundation, are actively involved in policy processes to address extremism, contributing to decision-making at multiple levels of government through varying forms of participation. These findings suggest that CSOs act not only as first responders to local needs but also as sources of community-based policy innovation. In the global literature, CSOs are widely recognized as key actors in strengthening participatory democracy, expanding spaces for public deliberation, and balancing state power through advocacy, social service provision, and policy oversight (Edwards, 2019; Anheier, 2014; Banks et al., 2015).

However, the development of CSOs in Indonesia remains closely intertwined with regulatory challenges and state–society power dynamics. During the New Order era, the

regulation of CSOs was highly centralized and repressive, reflecting an authoritarian approach that positioned them in a subordinate role (Hadiwinata, 2003; Antlöv et al., 2010; Aspinall, 2005). The 1998 Reformasi marked a transition toward greater democratic openness, expanding freedoms of association and assembly. At the same time, it created space for the emergence of organizations with ideological orientations that may conflict with the principles of nationalism, pluralism, and tolerance. Previous studies indicate that post-Reformasi political liberalization has not only facilitated the consolidation of democratic civil society but also enabled the growth of exclusive groups that exploit civil liberties to promote intolerant or transnational ideologies (Hefner, 2011; Mietzner, 2014; Mujani & Liddle, 2010). This development presents a key policy dilemma: how to safeguard freedom of association while preventing CSOs from undermining national integration and social cohesion.

Moreover, the relationship between the state and CSOs is not always cooperative; it is often characterized by regulatory tension, particularly in developing country contexts, where the state seeks to manage the expansion of CSOs in the interest of political stability and national security (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014; Dupuy et al., 2016). These tensions are reflected in increasingly stringent regulations governing the establishment, funding, and activities of CSOs, which in some cases may restrict the space for public participation. Conversely, CSOs often perceive such measures as constraints on fundamental freedoms, resulting in a dynamic and at times contentious relationship between the state and society. Therefore, a balanced approach is required, one that ensures effective oversight while safeguarding civil liberties, so that CSOs can continue to play a constructive role in democratic development.

“For example, the presence of religious organizations and identity-based groups that promote particular ideologies often generates social friction at the local level, particularly when their activities intersect with issues of intolerance, exclusivity, and the delegitimization of other groups. Several studies indicate that some organizations associated with transnational ideologies or strong religious identities mobilize

support through polarizing narratives that may undermine social cohesion (Mietzner, 2018; Hadiz, 2016). The dissolution of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in 2017 through Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu) No. 2 of 2017—later enacted as Law No. 16 of 2017—illustrates how the state employs legal instruments to restrict the activities of organizations considered inconsistent with the Pancasila ideology and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) (Asshiddiqie, 2006; Butt & Lindsey, 2012). At the same time, other studies show that many CSOs play a positive and strategic role in disaster mitigation, public health education, non-formal education, and advocacy for the rights of vulnerable and minority groups, particularly in areas not adequately served by the state (Antlöv et al., 2010; Banks et al., 2015).

Globally, many countries face similar challenges in managing relations between state and civil society. In India, the implementation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) has significantly restricted access to foreign funding for non-governmental organizations, citing national security concerns; however, it has also been criticized for narrowing civic space and weakening advocacy functions (Chaudhry, 2022; Dupuy et al., 2016). In Russia, the Foreign Agents Law has been used to monitor and stigmatize organizations with international affiliations, contributing to a decline in freedom of association (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In Turkey, the state has adopted a more repressive approach toward organizations perceived as threats to political stability and national security, particularly following the 2016 coup attempt (Özler & Obach, 2018). The Indonesian case reflects similar efforts to regulate CSOs through legal instruments while operating within a formal democratic framework. This comparison suggests that the central challenge lies not in whether the state should regulate CSOs, but in how to design regulatory frameworks that balance the protection of civil liberties with the maintenance of public order (Howell, 2000; Salamon et al., 2017).

The development of CSOs in Indonesia has attracted significant scholarly attention. Asrida et al. (2021) existing studies highlight their role in strengthening democracy through advocacy, social service provision, and policy oversight, Rahman et al. (2023) as well as their contribution

to sustainable development through community empowerment, environmental protection, and enhanced government accountability. Saryam et al. (2024) highlight the multidimensional nature of civil society organization (CSO) involvement in policy-making to address extremism, emphasizing multi-actor participation. However, existing studies on CSOs have not examined this issue in a comprehensive and integrated manner. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the phenomenon of CSOs in Indonesia across multiple dimensions, including regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements, public perceptions, and governance policies. It traces the evolution of CSO regulation from the New Order to the Reformasi era and relates these developments to local-level practices and inter-agency coordination challenges. The study also emphasizes the need to understand CSOs as dynamic socio-political actors that cannot be reduced to the administrative logic of the state.

Evidence from international studies indicates that political liberalization following democratic transitions is often accompanied by the rapid expansion of CSOs with uneven institutional capacity, including groups that pursue exclusive or ideological agendas, thereby posing new challenges to democratic governance (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Christensen et al., 2007). Overall, this article aims to contribute both theoretically and practically to the formulation of policies that support democratic, transparent, and civil society-oriented CSO development. It also provides a foundation for strengthening collaboration between the state and CSOs as strategic partners in advancing participatory and inclusive governance.

II. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a multi-source policy review design to analyze the dynamics of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia from regulatory, institutional, and state-civil society perspectives. The study is descriptive-analytical and is not classified as a conventional literature review, as it draws on a wide range of policy documents and institutional data (Bowen, 2009; Dunn, 2012). as its main secondary data sources. Within this framework, laws and regulations,

official government reports, and publications from relevant institutions were systematically analyzed to identify policy patterns, implementation gaps, and directions for strengthening CSO governance (Birkland, 2019; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Data sources included statutory regulations, official reports from ministries and government agencies, internal documents from the Directorate General of Politics and General Government (BSKDN), academic publications, national survey reports from independent institutions, and media coverage. All data were treated as secondary sources and analyzed through content analysis and policy interpretation to identify regulatory trends, dominant narratives, and strategic issues in CSO governance.

The study was conducted in 2024 by the Domestic Policy Strategy Agency (BSKDN), Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and was based on a review of more than 200 relevant documents. These included laws and regulations related to CSOs (e.g., laws, government regulations, and ministerial regulations), official reports from key ministries (such as the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights), local government performance reports, prior policy studies, and publications from research institutions and international organizations. The analysis also incorporated a systematic review of documents generated through focus group discussions (FGDs) and desk studies conducted by BSKDN in 2023–2024 across several regions, including Jakarta, Surakarta, and Makassar, involving representatives of local governments, academics, and CSOs. As all data were institutionally documented secondary sources, the study did not involve primary field data collection. Data were analyzed thematically using source triangulation to enhance the consistency and robustness of interpretation. This approach enables a contextual and reflective analysis of CSO governance dynamics in Indonesia while maintaining academic rigor and policy relevance.

III. Results and Discussions

A. Growth and Typologies of Civil Society Organizations in Indonesia

According to administrative data from the Directorate General of General Legal

Administration (Ditjen AHU) of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, by the end of 2023 there were more than 510,000 officially registered civil society organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia (Direktorat Jenderal Administrasi Hukum Umum, 2023; Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Republik Indonesia, 2023). These figures, derived from state administrative records, reflect the formal development of CSOs within the national legal framework. The year-on-year increase in the number of CSOs indicates an expansion of freedom of association in the post-Reformasi era. This trend is evident not only in overall organizational growth but also in the rising number of CSOs across major typologies, particularly in religious and socio-humanitarian sectors, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of CSOs by Major Typologies (2022–2023)

CSO Typologies	2022	2023	Trend
Religious	165,000	178,000	↑ Increase
Youth	72,000	78,500	↑ Increase
Social and Humanitarian (NGOs)	95,000	102,000	↑ Increase
Professional and Economic	68,000	74,000	↑ Increase
Culture and Customs	45,000	50,000	↑ Increase
Others (communities/hobbies)	41,000	47,500	↑ Increase
Total	486,000	510,000+	↑ Significant increase

(Source: Compiled from data from the Directorate General of General Legal Administration (2023) and BSKDN data)

The year-on-year increase in the number of civil society organizations (CSOs) reflects not only quantitative growth but also shifts in the composition of organizational typologies. As shown in Table 1, the most substantial growth occurred among religious and socio-humanitarian organizations (NGOs), which together accounted for more than half of all CSOs in 2023. This pattern suggests that public participation in Indonesia continues to be strongly shaped by religious

identity and community-based social service activities. At the same time, the growth of youth and interest-based organizations indicates a shift in participation among younger generations toward more flexible and adaptive organizational forms.

However, increases in the number of organizations are not necessarily accompanied by improvements in institutional capacity. The predominance of religious and social organizations may also lead to a concentration of influence on specific issues, including local political dynamics and the allocation of social resources. It is important to note that these data are administrative in nature and do not capture levels of organizational activity, which may result in an overestimation of the number of active CSOs. Accordingly, analyses of CSO growth should consider not only numerical expansion but also typological distribution, organizational capacity, and their contributions to social development.

From an institutional perspective, civil society organizations in Indonesia exhibit considerable diversity. They include entities with formal legal status—such as foundations and associations—as well as informal organizations that, despite lacking legal status, remain active in social activities. The legal framework governing CSOs includes Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations and Law No. 17 of 2013 on Community Organizations, as amended by Law No. 16 of 2017. CSOs in Indonesia encompass a wide range of typologies, including religious, youth, women's, customary and cultural, professional, non-governmental (NGO), advocacy-based, and interest- or hobby-based organizations.

Analysis of secondary data compiled by BSKDN indicates a consistent upward trend in the number of CSOs over the period 2015–2023. The total number increased from approximately 297,000 in 2015 to more than 510,000 in 2023, as presented in Table 2 and Figure 2. This trend reflects a substantial expansion in the scale of civil society; however, it does not necessarily correspond to improvements in institutional capacity or substantive contributions to social development.

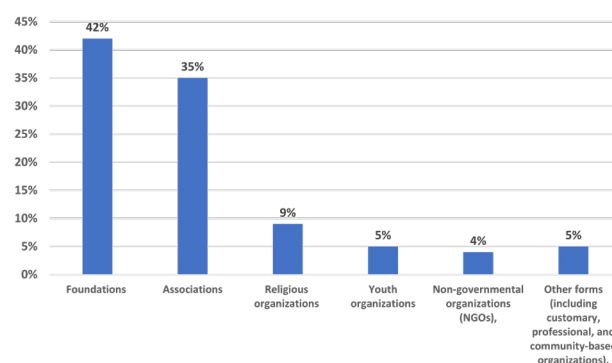


Figure 1. Distribution of CSOs in Indonesia by institutional typology (2023)

(Source: Ministry of Law and Human Rights)

Table 2. Growth Trend in the Number of CSOs in Indonesia (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Registered CSOs
2015	297,000
2016	320,000
2017	342,000
2018	370,000
2019	398,000
2020	420,000
2021	455,000
2022	486,000
2023	510,000

(Source: Compiled from reports of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, processed by BSKDN.)

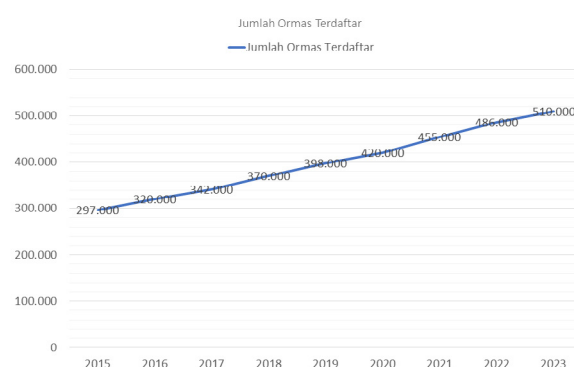


Figure 2. Growth Trend in the Number of CSOs in Indonesia (2015–2023)

(Source: BSKDN simulation based on administrative data)

It should be noted that the growth data presented in Figure 2 are derived from administrative records of the Directorate General of General Legal Administration (AHU)

and therefore reflect legal-formal registration status rather than actual levels of organizational activity. As a result, the figures may overestimate the number of active CSOs due to the inclusion of inactive or non-reporting organizations. This discrepancy between administrative data and on-the-ground realities underscores the need for improved verification mechanisms and cross-ministerial data integration. .

While the observed growth may indicate increased public participation, official sources also point to significant challenges in the governance of CSOs. Reports Kementerian Dalam Negeri (2023) indicate that compliance with activity reporting and the updating of organizational data among civil society organizations (CSOs) remains relatively low in several regions. Furthermore, studies by Wahid Foundation (2021) on trends in social intolerance suggest that weak administrative oversight and limited capacity-building have resulted in some registered CSOs becoming inactive while remaining formally recorded in state administrative systems. This situation reveals a gap between formal legal status and actual organizational activity, complicating evidence-based policy development, evaluation, and oversight.

In addition to administrative challenges, official reports and national media coverage also point to a small number of CSOs suspected of misusing their legal status for identity-based mobilization or the dissemination of intolerant ideologies. The annual report of the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT, 2020, 2022) indicates that extremist networks in Indonesia often utilize socio-religious organizations as channels for mobilization and recruitment. Consistent with this finding, study by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (2022) shows that 38% of respondents expressed concern about the presence of religious-based organizations perceived as promoting exclusive or intolerant agendas. These findings suggest that the quantitative expansion of CSOs, in the absence of strengthened governance, transparency, and capacity development, may generate social and political risks. However, this pattern should not be generalized across all CSOs in Indonesia.

From an institutional perspective, this reflects a form of institutional overload, in which

organizational growth outpaces regulatory and oversight capacity (Fukuyama, 2004). From a social systems perspective Luhmann, (1995) increasing societal complexity requires more adaptive and coordinated regulatory frameworks to prevent systemic dysfunction. In this context, the implementation of Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 56 of 2017 and No. 57 of 2017, which govern information systems and capacity-building for CSOs, is particularly important, although it continues to face technical, human resource, and inter-institutional coordination challenges. Overall, the growth of CSOs in Indonesia illustrates a central paradox of contemporary civil society: while it reflects the vitality of democratic participation, it also underscores the urgency of strengthening governance, capacity development, and integrated information systems across ministries and regional governments.

Accordingly, this expansion should be understood not only as an indicator of democratization but also as a significant challenge to the state's capacity to manage increasing social complexity. The rapid growth of CSOs has intensified administrative demands, as well as the need for guidance and oversight across levels of government, particularly at the regional level. In the context of decentralization, disparities in capacity across regional governments have resulted in uneven policy responses to civil society organizations (CSOs), both in the quality of guidance provided and the effectiveness of oversight. This may give rise to administrative crowding, whereby social actors expand more rapidly than the state's institutional capacity to manage them (Andrews et al., 2017; Fukuyama, 2004). Such a dynamic can lead to inefficiency, weak oversight, and an increased risk of governance failure. Accordingly, the growth of CSOs should be interpreted not only as an indicator of public participation but also as a signal of the need to recalibrate development policy design in line with capacity constraints, typological differentiation, and institutional risk.

B. Regulation and Dualism of Authority in CSO Management

Analysis of the regulatory framework indicates that CSO governance in Indonesia continues to be characterized by a dualism of authority

across government institutions. Law No. 17 of 2013 on Civil Society Organization, as amended by Law No. 16 of 2017, assigns the Ministry of Home Affairs responsibility for guidance and supervision, including the registration and reporting of CSO activities at both central and regional levels (see Articles 40 and 53). At the same time, the authority to confer legal entity status on CSOs—particularly associations—rests with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights through the Directorate General of General Legal Administration (AHU), in accordance with Law No. 16 of 2001 on Foundations and related ministerial regulations governing legal entity administration. This arrangement creates overlap in legality verification and institutional data validation, as a single CSO may be recorded in separate administrative systems without adequate data integration.

A lack of synchronization is also evident in supervision and the enforcement of administrative sanctions. While the Law authorizes the government—particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs and regional governments—to impose administrative sanctions up to dissolution (Articles 60–62), the legal status of organizations remains under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Consequently, an organization may be subject to administrative sanctions by the Ministry of Home Affairs yet remain formally registered as active in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights' legal entity system. This condition points not merely to a division of authority, but to overlapping mandates that are insufficiently coordinated, resulting in weak coordination, data inconsistencies, and limited effectiveness of national guidance and oversight.

Analysis on policy document and institutional reports further indicate that the absence of an integrated cross-ministerial information system has contributed to fragmented data and constrained monitoring of CSO performance. This inconsistency is evident, for example, in discrepancies between the databases of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights and the Ministry of Home Affairs. A number of organizations that have obtained legal entity status and remain registered in the administrative system of the Directorate General of General Legal Administration (AHU) are not recorded in the reporting or development systems of the

Ministry of Home Affairs or local governments. Conversely, some organizations that are administratively active in reporting activities at the regional level have not obtained, or have not updated, their legal entity status in the Ministry of Law and Human Rights system.

Another example is the presence of organizations that are formally registered and possess legal standing but do not conduct institutional activities, submit annual reports, or maintain active management structures. This highlights a gap between legal status (*de jure*) and actual practice (*de facto*). As a result, the government faces challenges in evaluating performance, allocating development programs, and enforcing administrative sanctions effectively. This gap underscores the importance of integrating cross-ministerial data systems as a prerequisite for accountable and data-driven governance of civil society organizations (CSOs).

From a governance perspective, this dualism of authority reflects weak horizontal coordination within government structures and underdeveloped whole-of-government mechanisms. Regulatory frameworks tend to emphasize administrative control and compliance, while incentive-based instruments, capacity development, and collaborative partnerships remain relatively limited. As a consequence, CSO regulation may be perceived as an instrument of state control rather than a facilitative framework for strengthening civil society.

Addressing these challenges requires clearer delineation of authority, the development of integrated information systems, and a shift from a predominantly coercive approach to a more collaborative governance model. Without improvements in regulatory design and institutional coordination, efforts to strengthen CSOs risk remaining ineffective and may further widen the gap between the state and civil society.

C. Public Perceptions of Civil Society Organizations and the Issue of Radicalism

The analysis of public perceptions in this study draws on national survey data published by independent research institutions, specifically Alvara Research Center and Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC), which are

treated as secondary data sources. These institutions were selected based on several methodological considerations, including their academic reputation and institutional credibility in conducting public opinion surveys in Indonesia, the use of national-scale probabilistic sampling methods, and the consistent publication of transparent and verifiable survey results. Both institutions also have a strong track record in examining socio-religious issues and the dynamics of civil society organizations (CSOs), making their data particularly relevant for analyzing public perceptions of CSOs and concerns related to radicalism. Accordingly, data from these sources are considered reliable and valid within a multi-source policy analysis framework. This study does not collect primary survey data; rather, it analyzes and interprets existing survey findings to understand public perceptions of CSOs in a policy context.

The survey data Alvara Research Center (2023) indicate ambivalence in public attitudes toward CSOs. While 48.5% of respondents expressed support for the role of CSOs as channels for socio-religious aspirations, 41.2% reported concerns about religious-based organizations engaging in identity-based politics. In addition, 33.7% of respondents indicated that they did not clearly understand the primary functions of CSOs in their communities. These findings suggest that public perception is shaped not only by ideological considerations but also by limited access to information and low levels of public literacy regarding the roles and boundaries of CSO activities.

This finding is reinforced by reports from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT, 2020), which identify the potential for the spread of transnational ideologies among a small number of CSOs. However, such findings should be interpreted with caution, as they tend to emphasize problematic cases and may risk overgeneralization. From a policy analysis perspective, public perceptions shaped by security narratives can contribute to the legitimization of more restrictive regulatory approaches, including the strengthening of state authority under Law No. 16 of 2017.

In academic literature, this phenomenon can be examined through the lenses of identity

politics and social conflict management. Quinn (2017) highlight how religious identity may become a source of tension if not managed inclusively. Survey evidence Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (2022) also indicates that some communities perceive certain religious organizations as exclusive, although such perceptions do not always correspond to actual practices at the local level. This highlights a gap between empirical reality and public perception, mediated by media dynamics and political discourse.

Disinformation and social media framing contribute to reinforcing negative perceptions of civil society organizations (CSOs). Several mainstream media reports indicate that provocative actions by a small number of actors are often generalized into collective stigma against CSOs as a whole, particularly during periods of heightened electoral activity. For example, media coverage of the disbandment of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia in 2017 and the government's ban on the Islamic Defenders Front in 2020 was frequently associated with narratives of radicalism and national security. Such framing has contributed to public perceptions that some CSOs share similar tendencies, even though, empirically, only a small proportion are involved in such activities (BBC News Indonesia, 2017; Kompas, 2020). Studies of Indonesia's digital media ecosystem further suggest that the spread of disinformation and the formation of echo chambers on social media reinforce perception biases against certain groups, including religious and social organizations (Lim, 2017). This indicates that public opinion is shaped not only by empirical conditions but also by media framing and patterns of information dissemination in digital environments.

Accordingly, ambivalent public perceptions of CSOs call for policy responses that extend beyond purely repressive measures. A good governance approach emphasizes transparency, participation, and accountability, including efforts to improve public literacy, enhance transparency of information on CSOs, and develop more proportionate and evidence-based state communication strategies.

Table 3. Public Perceptions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia

Perception Category	Percentage
Supports CSOs as channels for socio-religious aspirations	48.5%
Concerned about CSOs promoting radical ideologies	41.2%
Unaware of the main functions of CSOs in their local community	33.7%
Perceives that there are too many CSOs and that they are poorly coordinated	27.4%
Believes that CSOs contribute to the provision of social services	21.6%

Source: Alvara Research Center (2023)

Table 3 indicates that public perceptions of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia are ambivalent. On the one hand, CSOs are recognized for their contributions to social activities and community empowerment. On the other hand, a significant proportion of respondents associate CSOs with social conflict, isolated acts of violence, and political interests. These findings suggest that the quantitative growth of CSOs has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in public trust, reflecting a gap between institutional expansion and organizational performance. Negative perceptions are also shaped by media coverage of specific cases, which are often generalized to the sector as a whole. These data should be interpreted with caution, as they reflect perceptions shaped by the socio-political context. Accordingly, efforts to strengthen CSO development should extend beyond administrative measures to emphasize transparency, accountability, and effective public communication in order to enhance public trust.

D. Challenges in the Development and Governance of Civil Society Organizations

Analysis of policy documents and institutional reports indicates that the development of CSOs in Indonesia faces structural challenges arising from both internal organizational limitations and constraints within the government's monitoring system. Many CSOs, particularly those operating at the community level, encounter persistent challenges, including limited human resources,

weak organizational management, and restricted access to training and funding. At the same time, the government faces difficulties in ensuring equitable and proportionate support across CSOs due to limitations in data availability, monitoring systems, and cross-sectoral coordination.

One key issue is the low level of compliance with activity reporting and transparency requirements. According to an internal evaluation by the Ministry of Home Affairs, as documented in its 2023 institutional report, only approximately 30% of registered CSOs regularly submit activity reports through the CSO information system, as required under Ministerial Regulations No. 56 of 2017 and No. 57 of 2017. This finding, treated as secondary data in this study, highlights a gap between the regulatory framework and its implementation at the organizational level.

Development policies that remain dominated by top-down and administrative approaches are considered ineffective in substantively strengthening the institutional capacity of civil society organizations. Development efforts that focus primarily on reporting obligations and administrative compliance tend to overlook the strengthening of national values, tolerance, organizational professionalism, and social innovation. From a collaborative and co-governance perspective, this approach risks constraining the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) as strategic partners of the state and may undermine trust between the state and civil society (Osborne, 2010).

In this context, the BSKDN holds a strategic role in shaping a more integrated policy direction for CSO development. By developing a roadmap for institutional strengthening and fostering cross-sectoral synergies, BSKDN can promote a model grounded in local needs and organizational capacity. This approach is consistent with findings by Pratiko (2005) that emphasize the importance of adaptive regulation, context-sensitive development, and region-based mentoring in effective CSO governance.

Capacity disparities among CSOs remain a significant challenge. Larger organizations with established structures and extensive networks have greater access to development programs and resources, while many smaller CSOs remain marginalized within formal support mechanisms.

National media reports indicate that numerous local CSOs have not been actively involved in government development programs, suggesting weaknesses in needs assessment and institutional data systems.

Further challenges relate to monitoring the potential misuse of CSO legal status for purposes that conflict with legal and national principles. Development efforts must therefore be accompanied by stronger early warning systems, regular verification processes, and enhanced capacity among officials at both central and regional levels. The implementation of good governance principles, as articulated by the United Nations Development Programme, is critical, particularly in strengthening transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and policy inclusiveness.

These challenges are closely linked to the institutional capacity of government officials, especially at the regional level, where interaction with CSOs is most direct. In practice, development functions are often carried out by units with limited human resources, constrained budgets, and insufficient understanding of civil society dynamics. From a street-level bureaucracy perspective, policy outcomes are shaped by the discretion of frontline officials, who may prioritize administrative compliance over institutional strengthening. As a result, development may become a routine administrative exercise rather than a transformative process. This suggests that reforming CSO development requires more than regulatory change; it also demands sustained investment in institutional capacity—both within CSOs and across the public sector.

E. Case Study: Good Practices in CSO Management at the Regional Level

Several regional governments have developed CSO management practices aimed at improving governance, particularly in data management, capacity building, and partnerships. However, these practices vary across regions in both capacity and implementation outcomes. In general, CSO management at the regional level involves several key stages: (1) data collection and administrative verification by local government agencies; (2) mapping organizational types and activity levels; (3) implementing development

programs, including regulatory dissemination, management training, and partnership facilitation; and (4) monitoring and evaluation based on activity reports. In some regions, these processes are supported by digital information systems, although integration remains limited. In practice, several regions have demonstrated relatively effective partnership-based approaches, including regular dialogue forums between local governments and CSOs, as well as capacity-building programs involving universities and civil society actors. These initiatives have contributed to greater CSO participation in social development and improved government–community communication.

However, implementation in other regions remains constrained. Many local governments face challenges in maintaining up-to-date CSO data, limited human resources, and the absence of standardized operational procedures. In addition, not all CSOs actively participate in development programs, resulting in activities that remain largely administrative and do not adequately address substantive capacity development. In some cases, programs also lack performance-based evaluation mechanisms, making it difficult to assess their impact. These findings suggest that, while good practices in regional CSO management can be replicated, outcomes depend on key enabling conditions, including reliable data systems, adequate institutional support, and effective cross-sectoral partnerships. Without these conditions, implementation may remain suboptimal and yield largely administrative outcomes.

F. International Perspectives on CSO Management: Implications for Indonesia

From a global perspective, approaches to CSO management reflect varying state–civil society relationships, ranging from highly state-controlled models to trust-based partnership approaches. Theoretically, these variations can be understood through governance frameworks that position CSOs not only as objects of regulation but also as active participants in public governance (Osborne, 2010; [Cohen & Arato, 1994](#)).

Several countries, including India, Turkey, and Russia, adopt a state-centric governance model in which civil society organizations (CSOs)

are subject to strict oversight, particularly in relation to funding and political activities. In India, the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) restricts access to foreign funding for CSOs on national security grounds. While intended to prevent external interference, the policy has been widely criticized for constraining advocacy space and weakening civil society Amnesty International (2022). Similar patterns are observed in Turkey and Russia, where reporting requirements and the designation of organizations as “foreign agents” may function as instruments of political control.

In contrast, Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway adopt a collaborative governance approach that emphasizes strategic partnerships between the state and CSOs. Governments provide public funding based on performance and social impact, supported by transparent accountability mechanisms. Study by Enjolras & Strømsnes (2018) indicate that this model strengthens public trust and promotes citizen participation in policymaking. A comparable approach is evident in Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), which combines administrative oversight with efforts to strengthen internal organizational governance.

For Indonesia, this comparison suggests that the central challenge lies not in choosing between control and freedom, but in designing proportionate and context-sensitive policies. Given Indonesia's highly pluralistic civil society and large number of CSOs, a highly restrictive approach risks generating social resistance and undermining state legitimacy. Conversely, full adoption of the Scandinavian model is constrained by fiscal and institutional limitations, particularly at the regional level.

Therefore, international lessons for Indonesia are most relevant when directed toward strengthening transparency, performance-based social incentives, and adaptive state-CSO partnership mechanisms. This approach is consistent with co-governance principles, in which the state acts as a facilitator and regulator, while CSOs serve as strategic partners in promoting social cohesion. Thus, international comparison serves not merely as a normative reference but as an analytical basis for designing CSO development policies that are democratic,

effective, and responsive to the Indonesian context.

IV. Conclusion

The findings indicate that CSO governance in Indonesia remains marked by tension between an administrative focus on legality and oversight and the need to strengthen the CSO substantive role in development. This is exacerbated by fragmented authority across agencies, limited data integration, and a development system that remains insufficiently aligned with organizational needs and performance. Addressing these challenges requires several operational priorities. First, regulatory harmonization should be reinforced through formal inter-agency coordination, alongside a clear division of authority and joint technical guidelines for CSO registration, development, and oversight. Second, the development of a national, interoperable CSO information system based on a single identity should be prioritized to ensure data consistency and support evidence-based policymaking.

Third, CSO development should shift from an administrative focus to sustained capacity building, including training in organizational management, financial accountability, and partnership development. This effort should be supported through collaboration with universities, civil society actors, and the media to expand programme reach and effectiveness. Fourth, budget support, including social assistance, should be accompanied by performance-based evaluation and transparent reporting to ensure measurable impact. Fifth, strengthening public communication and disseminating good practices among civil society organizations (CSOs) are essential for building public trust, alongside consistent enforcement against misconduct by individual actors. With a more integrated, collaborative, and data-driven approach, CSOs are expected to function as strategic partners of the state in strengthening democracy and social development. Sixth, the BSKDN of the Ministry of Home Affairs should be further strengthened as a central hub for formulating evidence-based, cross-ministerial CSO development policies that are responsive to evolving civil society dynamics. This role is critical to ensuring that national CSO policy remains coherent and adaptive.

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