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CIVIL SOCIETY IN EASTERN INDONESIA

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Civil Society in Eastern Indonesia: A Social Analysis

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List of Abbreviations

AMAN	<i>Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara</i>	Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago
BAIS	<i>Badan Intelijen Strategis</i>	Strategic Intelligence Agency
BAKTI	<i>Yayasan Bursa Pengetahuan Kawasan Timur Indonesia</i>	Eastern Indonesia Knowledge Exchange Foundation
Bappenas	<i>Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional</i>	National Development Planning Agency
BIN	<i>Badan Intelijen Negara</i>	State Intelligence Agency
CBO	--	Community-based Organisations
CEPF	--	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CLUA	--	Climate and Land Use Alliance
CSO	--	Civil Society Organisations
ELSHAM	<i>Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Hak Asasi Manusia</i>	Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy
FOKER	<i>Forum Kerjasama Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat Papua</i>	Papua NGO Cooperation Forum
FoLu	--	Forest and Land Use
GEF	--	Global Environment Facility
GIS	--	Geographic Information Systems
HDI	--	Human Development Index
Jubi	<i>Jurnalis Berbasis Independen</i>	Independent based Journalists
LBH	<i>Lembaga Bantuan Hukum</i>	Legal Aid Institute
MHA	<i>Masyarakat Hukum Adat</i>	Customary law community
MoHA	--	Ministry of Home Affairs
NGO	--	Non-governmental Organisations
OAP	<i>Orang Asli Papua</i>	Indigenous Papuans
OSF	--	Open Society Foundation
Otsus	<i>Otonomi khusus</i>	Special Autonomy

PKBI	<i>Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia</i>	Indonesian Family Planning Association
PPMA	<i>Perkumpulan Terbatas untuk Pengkajian dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Adat Papua</i>	Limited Association for the Study and Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples in Papua
TAF	--	The Asia Foundation
WALHI	<i>Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia</i>	Indonesian Forum for the Environment
WRI	--	World Resources Institute
YAMAHAK	<i>Yayasan Hak Asasi Manusia Anti Kekerasan</i>	Anti-Violence Human Rights Foundation
YAPPIKA	<i>Yayasan Penguatan Partisipasi, Inisiatif, dan Kemitraan Masyarakat Indonesia</i>	Indonesian Society Strengthening, Initiative, and Partnership Foundation
YPMAC	<i>Yayasan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Amungme dan Kamoro</i>	Amungme and Kamoro Community Empowerment Foundation

Executive Summary

Civic space in Eastern Indonesia, including Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua, is shaped by unique regional dynamics and faces diverse challenges and opportunities. Unlike the broader trend of shrinking civic space in Southeast Asia due to authoritarianism, these areas display a mixed pattern of restriction and adaptation.

In Papua, a legacy of conflict, repression, and state surveillance severely hampers civil society, particularly for groups advocating for democracy and human rights. Organisations focused on environmental and social services experience slightly more flexibility, but operate within a climate of fear driven by security-focused policies. While Papua attracts significant funding tied to its natural resource wealth, local organisations are often sidelined in favour of larger intermediaries, perpetuating inequitable power structures.

In contrast, Maluku and North Maluku face neglect from the central government, limited financial resources, and reliance on small grants and local government support. These constraints restrict the growth of civil society organisations (CSOs) and hinder their ability to address systemic issues. Across all three regions, geographic isolation, poor infrastructure, and rigid donor requirements exacerbate the challenges, leaving grassroots movements under-resourced and struggling to create lasting impact.

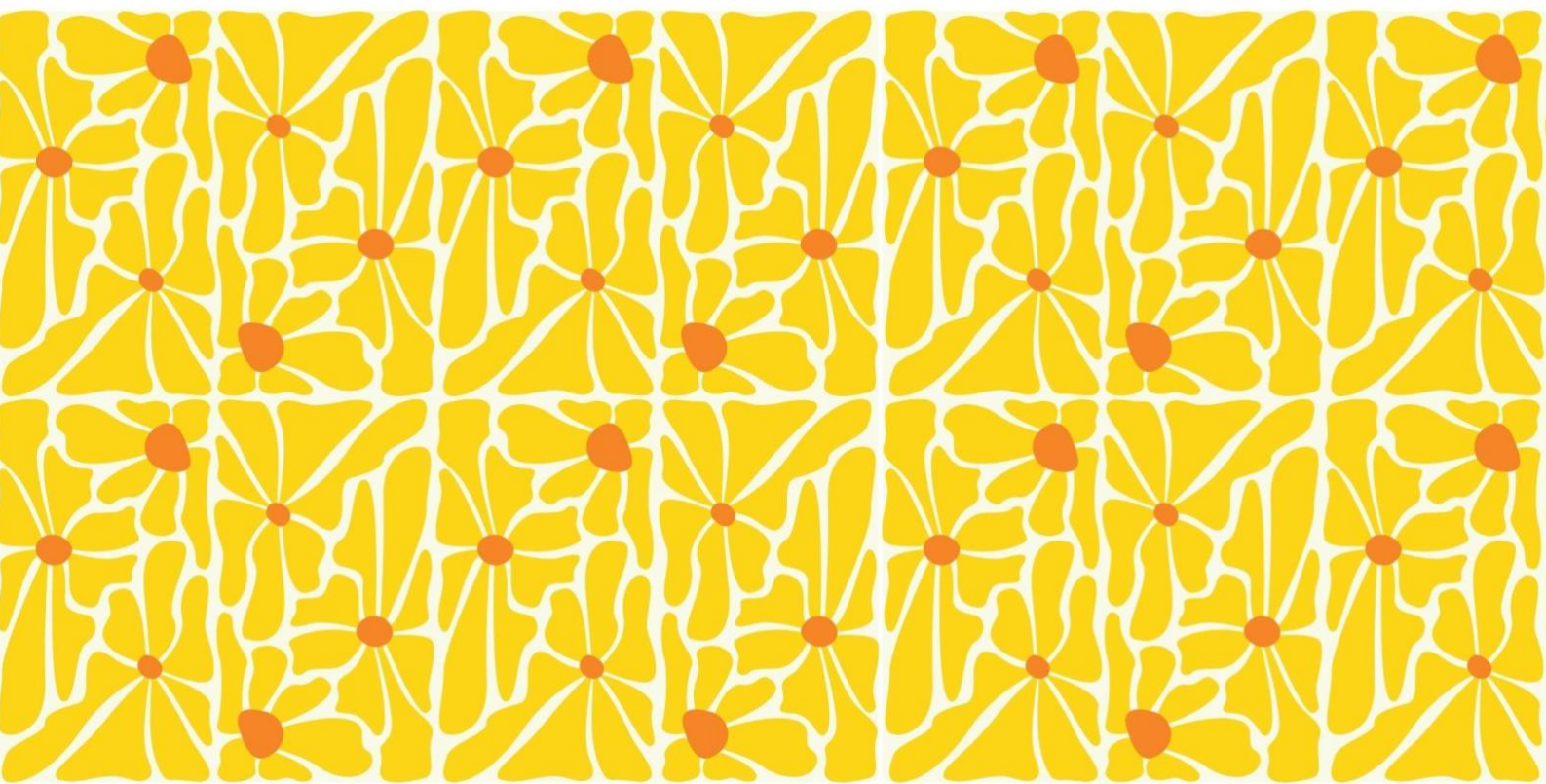
Corporate activities, including mining and palm oil industries, further undermine civic space by exploiting weak governance, fragmenting communities, and exposing activists to threats such as intimidation and violence. The absence of robust legal aid and emergency support mechanisms magnifies these risks. Despite these barriers, CSOs in Eastern Indonesia demonstrate resilience by utilising varied strategies. Youth-led movements, in particular, are emerging as key drivers of environmental advocacy, cultural preservation, and even political engagement. They leverage digital tools to amplify their efforts and navigate systemic barriers.

The study identifies critical gaps in support for CSOs, including limited and inequitable funding, sectoral biases favouring environmental causes over democracy and human rights, and weak coalition-building mechanisms. Many CSOs, especially in Papua, face significant challenges with administrative capacity due to inflexible donor requirements and insufficient investment in personnel development.

Additionally, geographic and logistical barriers limit outreach to underserved communities, weakening the foundation for local empowerment. Addressing these gaps requires fostering equitable donor-CSO relationships, simplifying administrative processes, and promoting sustainable capacity-building. Legal protections and targeted support for grassroots organisations are essential to enhancing the resilience and impact of civil society across Eastern Indonesia.

Chapter 1

Introduction



IN THIS CHAPTER

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Research Question and Purpose
- 1.3 Methodology
 - 1.3.1 Conceptual Definition
 - 1.3.2 Sampling Methods
 - 1.3.3 Data Collection Techniques

1.1 Background

This study aims to provide a social analysis of the current state of civic space and its impact on Eastern Indonesia's civil society. The study was carried out during a time when there were rising concerns about democratic setbacks in developing democracies in Southeast Asia (Ockey & Talib, 2023), but also in sub-Saharan Africa (Obiagu et al., 2021) and Latin America (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2023). There is such a rich body of literature on each country's historical conditions and political economy that generalizations must be made cautiously. However, it is safe to begin with the assumption that analysts, academics, and pro-democratic activists agree that the repression of civil society can be seen as a form or symptom of democratic setbacks (Diamond, 2015; Arugay & Sinpeng, 2018; Croissant, 2019).

In Southeast Asia, there are some similarities in at least three countries: Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. All three countries experienced democratic setbacks in 2014 with the overthrow of Shinawatra's government in Thailand (Chambers & Waitookiat, 2020), the rise of authoritarian populist Duterte in the Philippines in 2016 (Ramos, 2021), and the strengthening of political dynasties in Jokowi's Indonesia (Kenawas, 2023). Observations have shown that the elites in all three countries have undermined democratic institutions, and within such a condition, vibrant civil societies continue to exist (Lorch, 2021).

The dominant conceptions of civil society within Anglo-Saxon literature heavily rely on de Tocqueville's postulation between voluntary association and democracy (Guan, 2005), which primarily views that the associational aspects of civic space protect citizens from state intervention and nurture values that strengthen liberal democracy (Edwards, 2004). In contrast, a Gramscian approach, which is also widely used in Latin American and Asian Studies literature, conceptualises civil society as an area for counter-hegemonic struggle, where some actors within the civic space could be aligned with the ruling elites and co-opt the arena (Cohen & Arato, 1997). In archipelagic Indonesia, also the third largest democracy and the fourth most populous country in the world, civil society shows both Tocquevillian and Gramscian features, and civil society is "a realm in the interstices of the state, political society, the market, and the society at large for organisation by non-state, non-market groups that take collective action in the pursuit of the public good" (Alagappa, 2004, p. 34). This understanding aligns and overlaps with other, more practical definitions of civil society, such as "the array of non-governmental organisations, entities, and movements that have a presence in public life and who express interests and values based on human rights, ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations" (FICS, 2022, in David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2024).

In at least the past decade, civic space has been found to be shrinking (Sombatpoonsiri, 2019). In general, civic space is the "physical or digital, in which civil society—not governments or businesses—can operate and come together to assert their interests and exercise their human rights and freedom" (FICS, 2022 in David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2024). Still, it can also be a place where political elites use cyber armies to spread false information that hurts democracy (Rakhmani & Saraswati, 2021).

Moreover, discussions about Indonesia's democracy have been centred on the more urbanised and industrialised island of Java. The democratic developments in rural areas

and the islands outside of Java have been lacking. Critical studies have been done about the prolonged presence of the military in the provinces of Papua (Mietzner, 2023; Barter & Wangge, 2022), corruption in resource-rich Sulawesi (Mudhoffir, 2023), and faith-based civil societies in East Nusa Tenggara (Hutagalung, 2016), and they are certainly worth mentioning.

Significantly, those studies also mention the roles of local elites, who rise in the ranks of the political ladders, within the development of civil society in Eastern Indonesia. Thus, the broader phenomenon of democratic decline and the narrowing of civic space is a commonality that could be observed throughout this research on civil society in Eastern Indonesia. However, within civic space are also the collective struggles to pursue democracy as a “public good” or a common interest among civil society organisations in Eastern Indonesia (Steenbergen, 2016; Bayo, 2021; Nordholt, 2012).

This research investigates the state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia. Specifically, it focuses on CSOs and grassroots communities that work on climate and environmental issues related to forests and the ocean. We also explore the role of CSOs working on democracy and human rights issues, considering that civic space pressures also affect CSOs working in other areas, such as climate, forests, and the ocean.

We build on our previous study on the meaning of strong and effective CSOs in Indonesia's environmental sector (Afiff et al., 2022) and contextualise it to the local conditions in Eastern Indonesia. This study identifies four key levels at which strong and effective CSOs operate: organisational, management, financial, and programmes. These levels serve as foundations and tools to build resilient civil society ecosystems and thriving civic spaces by empowering CSOs and local communities working on environmental issues related to climate, forests, and the ocean. CSOs' strength lies in their deep understanding of their communities, although a challenge remains in bridging the gap between CSO adaptiveness and government bureaucracy. Along the same vein, this study prioritises unpacking local understanding and responding to threatened civic space.

This report presents findings on the state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia. It begins by outlining the study's methodology and providing an overview of the regional contexts of Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua. The report then examines the condition of civic space, along with the landscape and infrastructure supporting it. Finally, it serves as a foundation for identifying gaps and developing recommendations to strengthen civil society in Eastern Indonesia.

Box 1. Civic Space in Eastern Indonesia: Condition, Enabling Infrastructure, and Strategic Gaps

This report presents findings on the state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia. It begins by outlining the study's methodology and providing an overview of the regional contexts of Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua. The report then examines the condition of civic space, along with the landscape and infrastructure supporting it. Finally, it serves as a foundation for identifying gaps and developing recommendations to strengthen civil society in Eastern Indonesia.

1.2 Research Question and Purpose

As such, this study contributes to advancing and providing social analysis to understand civic space and its impact on civil society in Eastern Indonesia by answering the following questions:

1. What are civil society actors' perspectives on the state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia?
2. What are the threats to civic space, who do they impact, and how do they impact civil society?
3. What are the enabling conditions and constraints that impact the work of civil society groups?
4. How do civil society organisations perceive the strengths and weaknesses of civil society in responding to civic space, as well as their opportunities to strategise?
5. What civil society infrastructure needs to be in place to support civil society groups and/or organisations in Eastern Indonesia, specifically grassroots communities?
6. What are the windows of opportunity to support these strategies, and what are the risks of acting or not taking action?

1.3 Methodology

The methodology section aims to describe the rationale behind our data collection steps. We organise it into three subsections. The first is a description of the general concepts used in this study. The second subsection describes the geographical focus and how we choose informants and organisations. The third subsection describes how we gather information. All three subsections in this methodology section aim to achieve the study's objective.

1.3.1 Conceptual Definition

To understand the current state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia and how it affects civil society, we apply conceptual definitions of civic space and its elements, such as civil society, civil society organisations, infrastructure, and ecosystems. Such an approach helps us understand the notions and direct our investigation. Among the ideas, the following definition is included:

“Civic space is defined as the space, physical or digital, in which civil society can operate and come together to assert their interests and exercise their human rights and freedoms.

Civil society is defined as the array of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), entities, and movements that have a presence in public life and who express interests and values based on human rights, ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations.

Civil society organisation (CSO): any non-profit group or movement, organised on a voluntary basis at a local, national, or international level that engages on issues of common interest. CSOs can be registered or informal

Civil society infrastructure: the set of players (regrantors, consultants, trainers, associations, etc.) within a given geography that support civil society actors to be strong and effective.

Enabling conditions for civil society: the conditions that must be in place within a society or geography to ensure that civil society has the ability to operate safely and thrive.

Civil society ecosystem: the complex and interconnected networks of all civil society actors, their relationships, and interactions (Van Dyck, 2017)” (FICS 2022, in David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 2024).

This research project encompasses a diverse range of CSOs, both registered and informal, such as NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), advocacy groups, and network organisations. These organisations are actively involved in climate, forest and land use (FoLU), marine and ocean conservation, and civic spaces that shape civil society's operations. We also look into CSOs working on democracy and rights topics, as they influence the civic space in which CSOs work on climate, FoLU, and marine conservation operate.

Our understanding of civic space also includes a set of legal, policy, institutional, and practical enabling conditions for civil society actors to access information, express themselves, associate, organise, and participate in public life (UN OHCHR 2020; OECD, 2022). This research, in particular, explores how different actors in CSOs interact with one another. It examines how their tools—such as laws, policies, donors' frameworks, business practices, and cultural traditions—affect the spaces where civil society can voice their concerns, needs, and goals. Such tools may hinder, limit, or support civil society's activities and influence how it builds strategies or tactics to achieve its objectives. When studying the dynamics of civic space, we assume that civic space is contested. While the state uses various restrictions to suppress civic space, civil society acts as a countervailing force, defending civic space (Van der Borg & Terwindt, 2014). Such contestation occurs in at least three arenas: (1) existing institutional channels, including laws and procedures and the possibilities for contestation they offer; (2) discourse and the power to label and frame; and (3) the capacity to maintain and create new space (Buyse, 2018). A thriving civic space is thus determined by civil society's ability to shape and develop it while maintaining its capacity to respond to external pressures. Yet, rather than focusing on explaining the contested space, this study observes and describes how civil society actors in Eastern Indonesia would like to strengthen civic space and how they want to build partnerships or improve their civil society infrastructure.

1.3.2 Sampling Methods

The geographical focus in this research encompasses a broad area in Eastern Indonesia, which we define not only as a geographic construct (within “east” and “west”), but also as a historical formation of the Indonesian state. We acknowledge the uneven development in Indonesia, in which powers between urban, legitimate centers of authority (the West) is imbalanced in comparison to the East. Administratively, Eastern Indonesia consists of seventeen provinces—including Sulawesi, Maluku (Ambon/Ternate), North Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, and all provinces in Papua—and 3,157 districts. In this research, we focus on Maluku (Ambon/Ternate) and North Maluku (hereafter referred to as Maluku/Maluku Utara) as well as the six provinces within the

Papua region of Indonesia (hereafter referred to as Papua Land). The latter includes Southwest Papua (Papua Barat Daya), with Sorong as its capital; West Papua (Papua Barat), with Manokwari as its capital; Papua Province, with Jayapura as its capital; Central Papua (Papua Tengah), with Nabire as its capital; Mountains Papua (Papua Pegunungan), with Wamena as its capital; and South Papua (Papua Selatan), with Merauke as its capital.

Figure 1. Map of Indonesia and Scope of Research



Source: Map courtesy of Nations Online Project

We also purposefully select the types of informants and organisations to inform us about organisations' specific roles in Eastern Indonesia's civic space. Based on our preliminary review, we classify the types of organisations that occupy civic space in Eastern Indonesia into the following categories:

1. **Donors** with grants or programmes related to climate, forests, oceans, democracy, and human rights in Eastern Indonesia. The study systematically interviews donors to explore two types of funding: programmatic and non-programmatic. Programmatic funding refers to financial support allocated explicitly for projects, programmes, or initiatives with clearly defined goals and objectives. On the other hand, non-programmatic funding serves as general support or endowment funding unrelated to specific programmes or projects. This type of funding is often associated with philanthropic organisations or foundations that aim to support an organisation's overall mission or activities, rather than focusing on individual projects.
2. **Intermediary organisations**, with various focus areas, are equipped with broad networks within CSOs based in Maluku and Papua. They are defined as organisations that provide services to other CSOs, including regrants, training, consultancies, and network and movement conveners. National NGOs, which are

predominantly based in Jakarta or, in some cases, Makassar—such as WALHI, AMAN, WRI, BAKTI, and YAPPIKA—are classified as intermediaries.

3. **Local CSOs.** This study defines local CSOs as any non-profit group or movement organised voluntarily at the local level, specifically in Papua, Maluku, or North Maluku. These organisations can be formally registered or informal and may take the form of networks or movements. The study includes implementing CSOs, which carry out projects, programmes, or initiatives and are directly involved in implementing activities on the ground. Interviews with grassroots organisations or community-based groups—typically initiated and led by members of a specific community—are also part of the study. These groups often operate at the grassroots level, advocating for community needs and mobilising resources to address local challenges. Although they usually base their operations on physical proximity, they may also employ information technology to facilitate collective action. Note that this study does not include academics.

The selection of key informants considers several vital aspects, including geographical distribution (urban and rural), organisation type (registered and unregistered, donors, intermediaries, grassroots, and network), inclusion and diversity (indigenous groups, women groups, and youth groups), and issue-based (climate, FoLU, and marine conservation, democracy, and justice). See [Table 1](#) for detailed categories of informants and shortlisted organisations derived from secondary data collected by the authors.

1.3.3 Data Collection Techniques

This study employs qualitative data collection, combining semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with groups of informants deemed relevant to the research questions. To gather information on civic space, we categorised informants into donor groups, intermediaries, and implementing and grassroots organisations (as explained in the [sampling](#) section). Preliminary interviews and observations were also conducted during the David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s partner meetings in Ambon and Sorong.

We prioritised interviews due to the sensitive nature of the subject, especially in conflict-affected areas like Papua. This method allowed participants to share detailed perspectives in a secure, confidential, and comfortable setting, promoting openness while safeguarding their well-being.

We interviewed a total of 40 informants, including 13 women, who represented 36 organisations and institutions. These interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of participants’ experiences and perspectives on building civic spaces. We selected the informants from a diverse range of organisations and categorised them as follows:

- **Donors:** Six informants from four donor organisations participated, including programmatic and non-programmatic donors and a faith-based organisation managing programmes in Papua, Maluku, and North Maluku.
- **Intermediaries:** Eleven informants from nine intermediary organisations were interviewed. These organisations were involved in regranting, resource provision,

training, and programme implementation. While some intermediaries operated in both Papua and Maluku, whilst others were region-specific.

- **Local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):**

- Papua: Thirteen informants from 13 CSOs were interviewed. These organisations addressed issues such as climate change, governance, cultural preservation, democracy, and human rights, including unregistered movements. Informants were based in Jayapura, Manokwari, and Merauke and included female CSO leaders.
- Maluku: Ten informants representing eight organisations working on environmental conservation, cultural preservation, literacy, education, and youth-led movements were interviewed.

We also conducted two FGDs in addition to interviews. The first FGD engaged youth movements in Papua and Maluku to understand their unique experiences and perspectives. We held the second FGD at the end of the data collection phase to validate findings and gather feedback, ensuring the study's credibility and relevance.

The study adhered to strict ethical standards and cultural sensitivity, prioritising confidentiality and creating a safe environment for participants to share their insights. The research approach was carefully tailored to the socio-political dynamics of the regions, ensuring a respectful and accurate representation of participants' voices.

Table 1. Group of Informants and Shortlisted Key Informants

Type of informant	Papua	Maluku & Maluku Utara
Donor	Six informants from four donor organisations	
Intermediary	Eleven informants from nine intermediary organisations	
CSO	13 informants from 13 CSOs	Ten informants from ten CSOs
Total	40 informants (13 are women) representing 36 organisations/institutions	

Source: Research team analysis

Following the data collection process, we implemented a two-way triangulation approach (Flick, 2018) to enhance the credibility and reliability of our findings. This method involved cross-referencing information from multiple sources to strengthen the validity of the data and conclusions. Specifically, we conducted triangulation between secondary data, where available, and primary data collected through interviews and FGDs. We also conducted an FGD with informants to confirm and validate the findings. This process included a diverse group of key informants with varied perspectives and experiences related to CSOs in Eastern Indonesia.

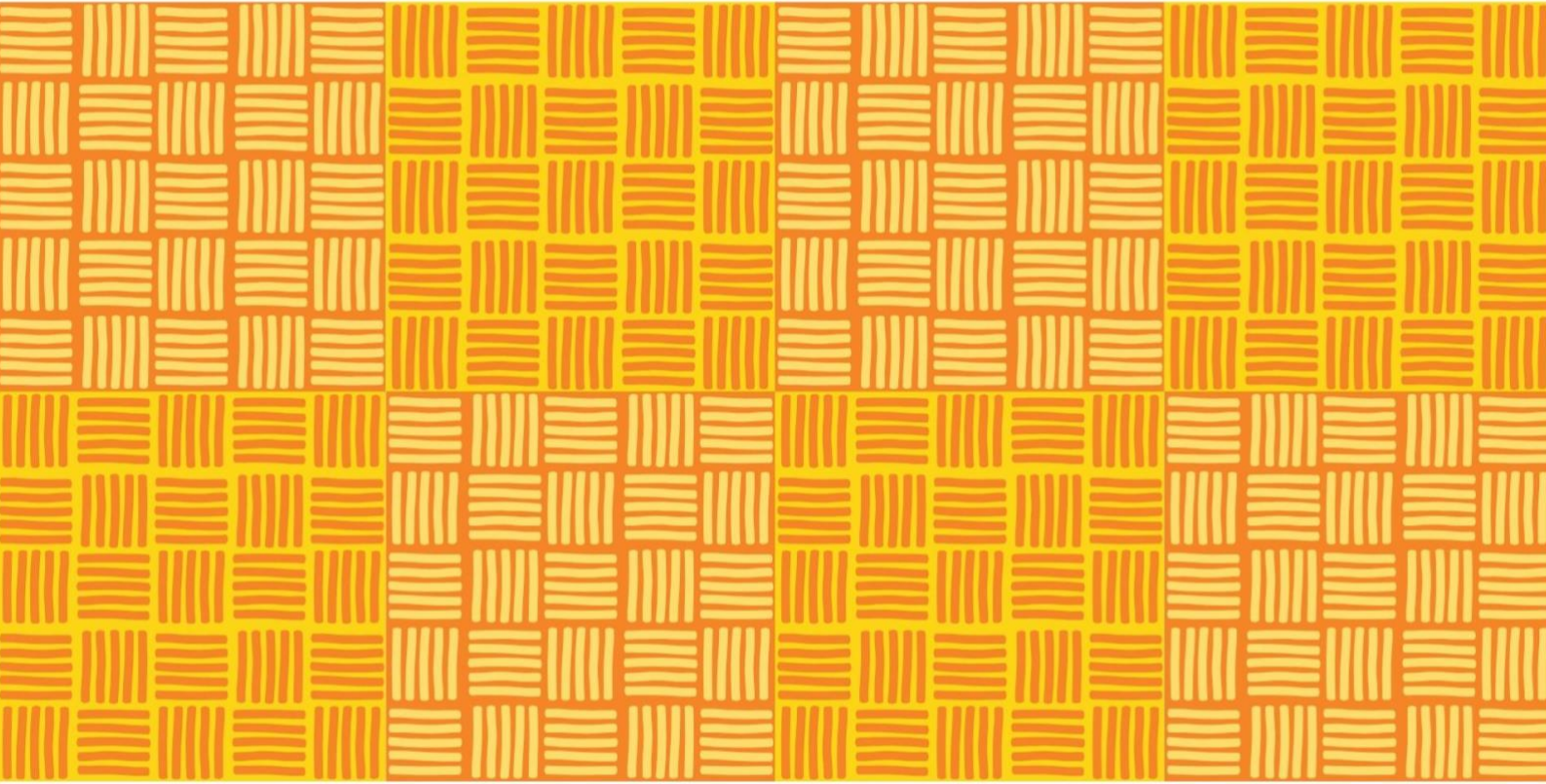
To ensure an inclusive approach, the research team engaged Jayapura-based researchers. Their involvement provided valuable local insights, as they were familiar with the region's context while remaining mindful of potential biases stemming from their close connection to the area. This balance reinforced the study's depth and objectivity.

Box 2. Scope and Methodological Approach

This scope of this study focuses on Eastern Indonesia, purposively selecting specific locales, types of organisations, and areas of work. To achieve the study's objective, we CSOs into three types: donor, intermediaries and implementing/grassroots organisation. We use interviews and focus group discussions to gather information about the state of civic space in Eastern Indonesia.

Chapter 2

The State of the Civic Space in Maluku and North Maluku



IN THIS CHAPTER

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Context of Maluku and North Maluku

2.1.2 Overview of CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku

2.2 Civil Society's Perception of Civic Space

2.3 Key Threats and Pressures on Civic Space

2.4 Opportunities and Challenges for CSOs

2.5 Support Infrastructure of CSOs and Networks

2.5.1 Accommodative Approach from Donors and Intermediaries

2.5.2 Trust Building with Local Communities and Leaders

2.5.3 Network and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

2.5.4 Capacity Building and Legal Support

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Context of Maluku and North Maluku

Understanding civic space in Maluku and North Maluku requires consideration of the region's broader political and economic background. These islands are historically and geopolitically significant, yet they have encountered tremendous obstacles in terms of development, lack of government attention, and inter-communal conflict in the past. Several interconnected elements influence the dynamics of civic involvement and civil society organisations in Maluku and North Maluku. First, consider the spatial setting, which emphasises both uniqueness and challenges. Maluku and North Maluku are two provinces in eastern Indonesia, each comprising a distinct archipelago with abundant natural resources, cultural variety, and strategic importance since the Age of Exploration. Known as "Spice Islands", Maluku Province comprises the core Maluku islands (Ambon, Seram, and the Banda Islands) and smaller islands distributed around the Maluku Sea. North Maluku Province encompasses the islands of Halmahera, Ternate, Tidore, and a number of other islands in the Halmahera Sea. Both provinces are characterised by their tropical climates, dense forests, and rich biodiversity. Their maritime location grants them access to abundant marine resources, including fish, coral reefs, and potential underwater mineral reserves. These provinces are also home to various unique cultures, languages, and traditions, making them a rich cultural mosaic.

Figure 2. Map of Maluku and North Maluku



Source: Map courtesy of r/imaginarymaps

Second, due to the previous centralization of development, these provinces have received little attention from the central government. This has resulted in the underdevelopment of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic possibilities (Leosari et al., 2023). Regarding educational attainment, only 31% of the residents have completed high school, while 7.3% hold a university degree (Pusdatin Kementerian

Kesehatan Provinsi Maluku, 2014). From 1950 to 1999, the Maluku islands formed a single province. However, following violent intercommunal clashes between Christians and Muslims, the region was divided into the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku in 1999. Now, Maluku province consists of 11 regencies and cities, whereas North Maluku has 10 regencies. Out of 21 regencies in this region, three are categorised as disadvantaged and outermost island regions (Maluku Provincial Health Office, 2015). The region's geographical remoteness and limited transport links have hindered effective integration into the national economy (Leosari et al., 2023). Despite its resource wealth, Maluku and North Maluku have received insufficient investment in infrastructure and industrial development. This neglect has created a sense of marginalisation among local communities, fuelling tensions and the ongoing quest for greater political autonomy and development assistance (Tutuarima et al., 2018).

The third aspect to consider is the history of conflict. Violent intercommunal clashes have characterised Maluku's conflict history, particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Goss, 2000). The conflict was marked by religious intolerance between Muslims and Christians, with ethnic, political, and economic implications that continue to this day (Klinken, 2001). The violence claimed many lives, displaced communities, and destroyed property, particularly in Ambon (Maluku's capital). Tensions between locals and migrants from other parts of Indonesia further fuelled the situation. Although the region has been largely peaceful in recent years, underlying issues of inequality, economic stagnation, social divides, and latent interreligious prejudice and distrust persist in some areas (Marten, 2021). To this day, the island is still recovering from the violent interreligious conflict, which remains a residual memory within Ambonese society.

Fourth, despite their limitations, the Maluku and North Maluku regions possess considerable untapped resources that could drive future economic growth. These potentials include (1) marine resources, particularly coral reefs and marine biodiversity that could support ecotourism and sustainable fisheries; (2) agricultural resources from a variety of crops, particularly spices (Maluku was once known as the "Spice Islands" of the world); (3) mineral resources, with significant nickel and gold reserves, particularly in Halmahera, North Maluku; and (4) tourism potential (Pattinama and Nanere, 2021). The region offers enormous potential for tourism development, with its coastal landscapes and cultural heritage. Major attractions include the Banda Islands, famed for their spice heritage, and the traditional cultures of Ternate and Tidore.

These interconnected factors—spatial context, historical neglect, conflict history, and natural resource abundance—create a uniquely challenging environment for civic space in Maluku and North Maluku.

2.1.2 Overview of CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku

Several demographic and contextual factors shape the civil society landscape in Maluku and North Maluku. The demographics of CSOs in these provinces can be described in three ways: the diversity of issues they address, their spatial distribution and expansion, and the context of small island areas that shape their operational environment.

According to data from our current database, which is generated from various sources, Maluku has 32 NGOs, while North Maluku has roughly 35 NGOs. However, the actual number is greater, as numerous CSOs remain unregistered or function informally within

local networks. Limited sources and accessibility challenges, coupled with the distinct spatial-political dynamics of both provinces, make it difficult to identify these organisations. CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku address various issues reflecting the region's historical, political, and cultural context. As both provinces are situated on small islands, they also generally lack basic infrastructure, including healthcare, education, and sanitation (Pattinama & Nanere, 2021).

Regarding the diversity of issues, CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku focus on a wide range of critical social, environmental, and humanitarian issues. These include climate change, marine conservation, women's empowerment, and children's protection, indigenous rights to customary forests, access to education and healthcare, post-conflict trauma recovery, and youth involvement. Given the provinces' extensive coastal areas and small island settings, many CSOs working in environmental protection also addressed the unique vulnerabilities of small islands to ecological changes and the risks posed by natural disasters or extractive industries as mining¹.

The growth of CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku has been increasingly significant since the 1999 conflict. They have played an important role in promoting peacebuilding, reconciliation, and trauma rehabilitation in affected communities.² In recent years, youth-led CSOs have become more active, particularly in education, gender equality, disaster risk reduction, and environmental issues.³ The increased youth engagement mirrors a larger demographic transition as younger generations assume new leadership roles in civil society. However, our findings indicate that there are still tensions between the new and older generations, which influence the dynamics of CSO perspectives and strategies in Maluku and North Maluku.

In the past, Ambon—the provincial capital and the center of much of the region's social and political activity—was primarily home to the development of CSOs in Maluku. However, over time, CSOs' reach and influence have spread throughout the province, particularly in North Maluku and the South Seram Regency. Several factors, particularly regional expansion, power decentralisation, and diversification of issues, have driven this positive trend.

The benefits of regional autonomy, which allowed for more local administration and resource allocation, have aided the expansion of CSOs outside of Ambon. Organisations are forming in more isolated parts of Halmahera (North Maluku), Seram Island, and other small islands in the archipelago, which primarily work on environmental issues such as WALHI Malut and Lembaga Pesisir dan Lautan Kie Raha—eLSiL Kie Raha) or marginal group empowerment such as Daurmala, Srikandi Sibela, just to name a few. This development has resulted in a more geographically diverse civil society landscape; however, Ambon remains a focal point for many advocacy activities.

The spatial characteristics of small island areas significantly affect the work of CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku, with challenges such as high transportation costs and weather constraints often delaying project implementation. Many small islands are remote and difficult to access, with transportation options limited to expensive and often unreliable boats or small aircraft. These logistical challenges frequently cause delays in

¹ Based preliminary interview during the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Partners Meeting in Ambon and confirmed through interview with all respondents from Maluku

² Based on discussion during the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's Partners Meeting in Ambon and interview with informants C-M-02 and C-M-03

³ Based on FGD with informants C-M-04, C-M-05, C-M-06, C-M-07, and C-M-08

project implementation and escalate costs, which can occasionally create friction between CSOs and donors or intermediary organisations.⁴

Due to their high interdependence, these small islands face significant environmental issues related to the relationship between land and sea conditions.⁵ Small islands in this region are especially vulnerable to climate change, resource depletion, and infrastructure shortages. These challenges drive the development of the CSO network and forum focusing on issues related to climate, natural resource management, and the livelihood of local communities in small islands. One example is Walhi Maluku Utara, which includes the Litera Institute, Perhimpunan Institut Lingkar Arus Studi (PILAS), Daulat Perempuan Maluku Utara (DAURMALA), Sel-Kepsul, Studi Bahari Nusantara, eLSiL Kieraha, Sahabat Alam (SALAM), Perkumpulan Pakativa, and Fajaru Maluku Utara. Another example is Jaring Nusa Kawasan Timur Indonesia, a coalition of 18 CSOs in Eastern Indonesia that includes EcoNusa, Perkumpulan PakaTiva, WALHI Maluku Utara, Moluccas Coastal Care, and Tunas Bahari Maluku.

The unique geographical context in Maluku and North Maluku presents significant challenges for CSOs in advocating for policy change and strengthening institutional capacity. This is particularly evident in coastal regions and small islands, where the extractive mining industry and large-scale palm oil monocultures are prevalent.

CSOs working on women's and children's issues and broader socio-economic challenges in Maluku and North Maluku are particularly impacted by the region's geographical isolation. The archipelago's small, often inaccessible islands further complicate outreach efforts. In addition to these logistical barriers, low levels of education and widespread poverty exacerbate the difficulties in community empowerment. These two issues are also significant contributors to the high incidence of violence in the region, particularly in rural, hard-to-reach areas. Domestic violence and sexual violence against children are widespread, with the latter often attributed to the easy accessibility of pornographic content on the internet, coupled with a lack of sexual education. Furthermore, entrenched social norms continue to frame domestic and sexual violence as private household matters, leading to underreporting and impeding legal intervention. While immigrant communities tend to have more progressive views on these issues, indigenous populations often maintain a more conservative and insular perspective.

CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara also face the dual challenge of addressing immediate community needs while promoting long-term, sustainable development. At the same time, the unique cultures and social structures of small island communities can also impact the effectiveness of CSO activities. According to our informants, the challenges CSOs face in accessing remote communities, the absence of stable funding sources, and limited financial capacity mean that many groups in these areas remain excluded from empowerment and advocacy programmes. The financial instability and lack of consistent donor support exacerbate internal weaknesses within CSOs, leaving them with inadequate resources to develop long-term, sustainable programmes. Consequently, many local CSOs struggle to maintain focus and continuity in their work, leading to fragmented and short-term interventions.

⁴ Based on interviews with informants C-M-02, C-M-05, I-03 and confirmed through FGD with youth-led CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara

⁵ Based on interviews with informants C-M-02 and C-M-05

2. 2 Civil Society's Perception of Civic Space

The state of civic space in Maluku and North Maluku remains challenging, especially from the perspective of CSOs operating in these provinces. According to our informants, civic space in Maluku and North Maluku was minimal, but began to open gradually following the reform and conflict in 1998 and 1999⁶,

In the past, there was no civic space or room for expression, nor was there an environment or mechanisms that allowed civil groups to have real access to participate in the policy-making process

Nowadays, the key issues they face are the lack of attention and limited funding support from national and international NGOs. These hamper the ability of local CSOs to address pressing issues in the region thoroughly. Many organisations rely on local support, often through government-funded projects, which can restrict their autonomy and limit their capacity for independent advocacy.

In contrast to the Papuan context, where open conflicts are prevalent and garner significant attention, people rarely notice Maluku and North Maluku. One of our respondents, representing a Maluku CSO expressed, "We often find ourselves overlooked." This includes restrictions on civil groups' critiques of the implementation of various policies. Additionally, many cases of potential human rights violations related to environmental issues, such as extractive or illegal logging, remain relatively unexposed.

The lack of media coverage and public attention surrounding mining-related violence can partly be attributed to the heavy surveillance and control in mining areas. Sources report that even Indigenous people seeking to enter these zones are subjected to suspicion and intense scrutiny, akin to foreign visitors. This stifling environment has reached such extremes that CSOs working in the social sector have encountered difficulties delivering disaster relief during natural events, such as floods, in mining-affected areas. This pervasive surveillance and control limit the ability of CSOs to provide essential services and support, further exacerbating the challenges faced by communities in these regions.

Our interviews with local activists also reveal that CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku struggle with inadequate funding, especially from national and international sources. Many CSOs are unable to secure long-term funding or develop sustainable initiatives.⁷ Due to their geographical remoteness, international NGOs often overlook these regions, whilst national NGOs tend to concentrate on more politically prominent areas such as Java or Sumatra. This lack of funding forces has caused many CSOs to depend on short-term, donor-driven projects, and often tied to government priorities, leaving them vulnerable to political or financial support shifts.

As a result of funding gaps from external sources, many CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku depend on government-funded programmes. While this dependency can provide much-needed resources, it also introduces limitations on advocacy and self-determination. Projects funded by the government may limit CSOs' ability to challenge

⁶ Based on interview with informants C-M-03 and C-M-02

⁷ Based on interview with informants C-M-01 and C-M-02

government policies or speak out on contentious issues, particularly in areas related to resource extraction, land rights, and environmental degradation. This also has caused a misconception among local governments, which often interpret a cooperation proposal from CSOs as a funding request, rather than to be involved in CSOs' programmes.⁸ As mentioned by one informant,

The government is responsive and inclusive in regards to issues that are directly aligned with their achievement targets such as education, women's and children's protection, and disabilities. However, they are sensitive to issues related to mining and land rights, including indigenous peoples' rights.

This dynamic often requires organisations to balance their mission fulfillment with maintaining positive relationships with local authorities and funders. As a result, many organisations cover issues related to economic empowerment and poverty alleviation, while issues related to human rights are relatively untouched.

The challenges CSOs face in accessing remote communities, coupled with the absence of stable funding sources and limited financial capacity, mean that many groups in these areas remain excluded from empowerment and advocacy programmes. Financial instability and a lack of consistent donor support exacerbate internal weaknesses within CSOs, leaving them with inadequate resources to develop long-term, sustainable programmes. Consequently, many CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku struggle to maintain focus and continuity in their work, leading to fragmented and short-term interventions.

In general, CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara also struggle to consolidate the civic movement and ensure organisations' survival and sustainability in the context of small islands. Efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of local CSOs typically involve partnerships with larger, better-funded organisations, though these collaborations are often contingent on the availability of program-specific funds. Another strategy for building local CSO capacity is through information-sharing platforms, such as ELSIL for the fisheries sector or the Temu Rakyat forum, which networks groups like WALHI and AMAN for environment and rights issues, and Kapal Perempuan for GEDSI issues. These forums provide valuable spaces for cross-organisational learning and knowledge exchange, although they depend on resource availability.

Informal networking has become one of the strategies they adopt to navigate the challenges in Maluku and Maluku Utara. Support is needed to design a suitable CSO network. As one informant said,

CSO consolidations are mostly case-based. We still need to design a strong, sustainable network, which will require much discussion among ourselves.

2.3. Key Threats and Pressures on Civic Space

CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku face a range of interconnected threats and pressures that undermine their capacity to operate effectively. These threats and pressures arise from external factors, such as local political dynamics and the influence of extractive

⁸ Based on interview with informants C-M-02, C-M-03 and C-M-05

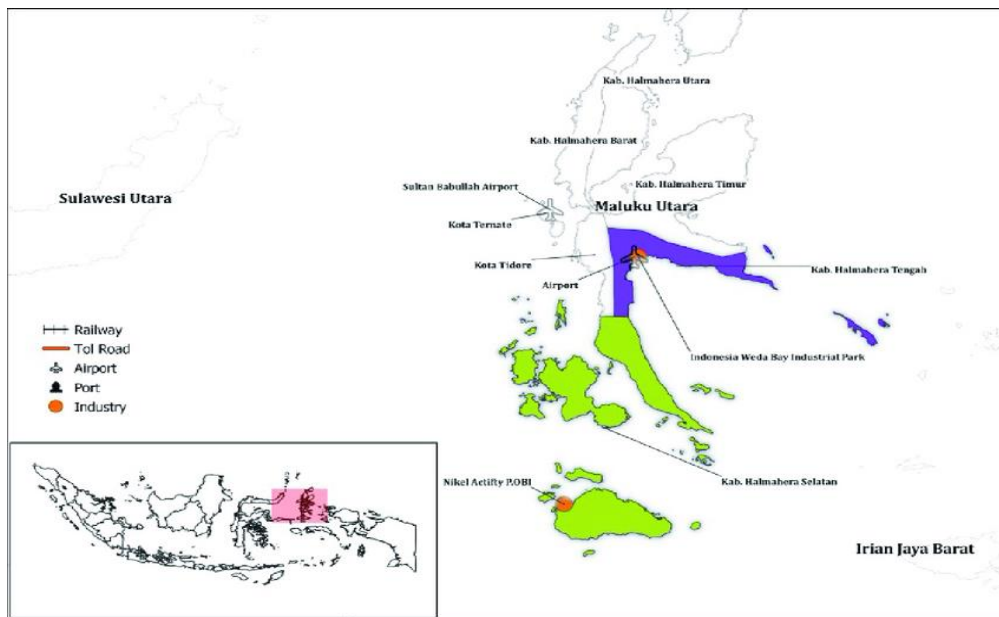
industries, as well as internal challenges related to organisational capacity, local community trust, and relationships with local stakeholders. These pressures limit civil society's operational capacity and place activists and organisations at risk of criminalisation, intimidation, and marginalisation.

Subtle conflicts, particularly around mining and extractive industries in remote areas, characterise the local socio-political landscape in Maluku and North Maluku. In this region, conflicts related to environmental justice and local community rights have become increasingly prominent in regions where large-scale nickel mining operations are active, particularly in North Maluku. One of the most striking examples is the Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park in Halmahera. The mining and smelting activities in this area have caused widespread environmental degradation, clearing thousands of hectares of forests and disrupting local ecosystems. Indigenous communities and local residents have been severely affected by these operations, facing forced displacement and loss of access to their traditional lands and resources.

Reports from organisations such as Climate Rights International (2024) and Mongabay (2024) shed light on the significant human rights violations associated with these mining activities. Local communities have expressed concerns about their rights being trampled during the land acquisition process. Many report that their land was taken without proper compensation or consultation. In some cases, individuals were unable to negotiate fair land prices, while others were subjected to intimidation and threats, including coercion by the police, to sell their land. This forced displacement not only affects the livelihoods of local people, but also disrupts their cultural ties to the land, further deepening the social and economic divide between local communities and the corporate entities that exploit these resources.

The environmental impacts of nickel mining in Halmahera are equally concerning. The clearing of vast forested areas has contributed to deforestation, endangering local biodiversity and exacerbating climate change. Pollution of nearby rivers and seas as a result of mining activities has poisoned local water sources, which are vital for drinking, agriculture, and fishing. This pollution has caused irreparable damage to the natural resources that local communities rely on for survival.

Figure 3. Map of Nickel Industries in North Maluku



Source: Map courtesy of Eugene Sebastian

These environmental and human rights violations underscore the ongoing struggles faced by local communities and CSOs advocating for environmental justice in regions like Halmahera. The growing presence of extractive industries, coupled with a lack of adequate legal protections for indigenous rights, places immense pressure on CSOs to challenge the powerful economic forces behind these operations. At the same time, state repression, together with limited legal aid and financial resources, makes it difficult for these organisations to effectively mobilise and hold mining companies accountable. The tensions surrounding land rights, environmental degradation, and the fight for justice in the face of powerful corporate interests continue to define the struggles of local communities in the region, often leading to direct confrontations with both state and corporate authorities.

Unlike more overt conflicts in regions like Papua, tensions in Maluku and North Maluku often arise from horizontal disputes within communities. Various factors—such as local elite interests, manipulation of indigenous communities, religious sensitivity, and post-conflict trauma—fuel these tensions.⁹ According to our informants, corporations often exploit and manipulate traditional leaders and local people, contributing to horizontal tension. In small island areas where extractive industries operate, companies frequently exploit indigenous communities by offering empty promises, such as development benefits or land compensation.

Traditional leaders and local residents, who may also serve as government officials or work within extractive industries, can exacerbate community tensions for their personal gains.¹⁰ This exploitation and manipulation erode trust among community members and undermine the credibility of CSOs when confronting threats from corporate or state apparatus. According to our informants, many CSOs face resistance from both local

⁹ Based on interview with informants C-M-01, C-M-02, C-M-03 and C-M-05

¹⁰ Based on interview with C-M-01, C-M-02, and C-M-03

communities and corporate interests when attempting to implement advocacy initiatives.

Furthermore, activists and CSOs working to expose environmental degradation or human rights violations linked to extractive industries are particularly vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and violence.¹¹ Many activists face criminal charges, including accusations of defamation or incitement, particularly when challenging large-scale projects. Legal protections for these activists remain weak, and access to legal assistance is often limited, further isolating those who take a stand.¹² For instance, CSOs on Obi Island in North Maluku have encountered multiple obstructions from local residents and corporate stakeholders, impeding their efforts to carry out advocacy programmes. In addition, journalists investigating environmental conflicts on Obi Island were arrested and detained in 2021, highlighting the restrictive environment in which these organisations operate.

Therefore, these threats and pressures restrict CSOs' ability to engage in independent advocacy and expose activists to risks caused by the shrinking civic space. The lack of attention from national and international funding bodies and the difficulty of accessing legal assistance exacerbate the situation, leaving many civil society organisations struggling to maintain their work in such a hostile and resource-constrained environment.

2.4. Opportunities and Challenges for CSOs

The growing presence of extractive industries in Maluku and North Maluku—such as mining, logging, and oil and gas exploitation—presents a significant challenge to CSOs. These industries often operate with minimal regard for environmental sustainability or the rights of local communities, including small island populations and indigenous groups (Karman et al., 2024). Powerful business interests and local authorities linked to these industries increasingly put CSOs advocating for environmental protection, land rights, and social justice at risk of criminalisation and pressure.

Challenges for CSOs in both provinces stem from their relationship with municipal and village administrations, which often prioritise infrastructure and economic growth over social and environmental sustainability. These administrations are more likely to support development projects, notably in the mining and agriculture sectors than to work with CSOs that advocate for human rights or environmental protection.¹³ Local governments still tend to view CSOs as entities seeking funds, rather than strategic development partners.¹⁴ This lack of awareness of CSOs' roles in policy advocacy and community empowerment impedes their ability to influence policymaking or gain government support. Policy advocacy remains challenging to penetrate, and engagement is frequently transactional, focusing on short-term financial support rather than the development of long-term partnerships.

¹¹ Based on interview with informants C-M-01 and C-M-02

¹² Based on interview with informants C-M-01, C-M-02 and I-10

¹³ Based on interview with informant C-M-01 and confirmed through FGD

¹⁴ Based on interview with informants C-M-01, C-M-03, C-M-05, and C-M-06

Governmental challenges further complicate CSO operations, especially in North Maluku. Access to vital data for programme implementation is often obstructed, with local government officials either lacking knowledge of their responsibilities or showing reluctance to collaborate with CSOs. In some cases, CSOs working on social and economic issues have found it difficult to obtain basic village data due to the government's limited technical capacity to compile and maintain databases. This forces CSOs to rely on informal networks, often leveraging personal connections within government to secure the necessary information for their programmes.

Power dynamics involving local authorities and influential figures also present a formidable barrier to cooperation between CSOs and local governments. This is most evident in conflicts related to the mining sector, where entrenched power structures make it difficult for CSOs to expose and advocate for justice in cases of violence and human rights violations. The victims of these violations are diverse, including mine workers, women and children, indigenous people, and traditional communities. In some cases, violence directed at CSO activists and journalists goes largely unreported, which underscoring the oppressive climate in which these organisations operate.

For CSOs working in post-conflict zones, building trust among diverse religious and ethnic groups remains a challenge, as the legacy of religious conflict still affects the region's social fabric. In areas that have experienced religious or ethnic conflict—such as parts of Ambon and the Maluku Islands—community trust in CSOs is fragile and can take years to rebuild. Communities remain divided along religious lines, and religious sensitivity can make it difficult for CSOs to operate in certain areas, requiring months or even one year to build trust.¹⁵ These complex local dynamics create an environment in which civil society must navigate sensitive issues of ethnic, religious, and political division, often leading to tensions that limit the effectiveness of CSO initiatives. As such, CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku must work hard to establish credibility and community trust, which requires sensitive, long-term efforts beyond the scope of any single project.

Another challenge for CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku is their relationship with donors and access to funding. Many national and international NGOs lack a deep understanding of local challenges, such as accessibility issues, weather conditions, and transportation limitations. These factors significantly impact the feasibility and sustainability of projects in remote areas, sometimes resulting in inefficient or disconnected interventions.¹⁶

Donor-driven programmes often prioritise short-term results and technocratic solutions that fail to address the deeper, long-term needs of the local community. These projects tend to focus more on administrative efficiency and quantifiable outcomes than on developing locally sustainable solutions or fostering long-term capacity building. National and international NGOs may set high expectations for local community engagement and benefits, which local CSOs cannot always meet due to organisational capacity or technical constraints. One informant from a youth-led CSO in Maluku said,

Some donors and intermediaries provide remuneration for local people engaged in discussion or consultation, and they expect us to do the same.

This discrepancy can lead to disillusionment and mistrust between communities and the organisations that support them. The presence of intermediary organisations that also

¹⁵ Based on interview with C-M-05

¹⁶ Insight from FGD with Maluku and Maluku Utara-based CSOs

implement programmes in Maluku and North Maluku creates rivalry and competition for resources between local CSOs and larger, donor-backed intermediaries.¹⁷ Intermediaries, typically incentivised by large-scale funding projects, may undercut grassroots CSOs by offering their own services or programmes, leading to fragmentation within civil society and competition for limited resources.

Internally, local CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku also face challenges from their own ranks and in their relationships with the community. We also found characteristics of patron-led relationships among CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara. This is not necessarily negative, as CSOs within these cliques may benefit from sharing information about funding opportunities and collaboration. However, this type of relationship also carries the risk of division within the civil society movement if conflicts arise. While not widespread, internal tensions between different NGOs can undermine the coherence and impact of the broader civil society movement. These tensions often stem from competition for scarce resources, differing approaches, or misunderstandings about roles and priorities.

Conversely, the various challenges CSOs face in Maluku and North Maluku create an agile civil society that recognises the importance of strong network and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Coalitions such as Walhi Maluku Utara and Jaring Nusa Kawasan Timur Indonesia reflect a collegial spirit. Additionally, lax and informal networks often form in the wake of donor programmes, discussions, and forums. Although limited, there are also examples of closer cooperation with local governments, such as with the province's Department of Marine and Fisheries. However, the sustainability of such partnerships relies heavily on local government's own programmes and the willingness of key officials to engage with CSOs.

CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara also recognise the value of engaging the local community and adopting a bottom-up approach to its program design and implementation. Many organisations require staff to live alongside target communities to build trust and gain a genuine understanding of their situations and needs. This approach lays the foundation for more meaningful outcomes and impact, but it also requires longer timelines for project design and implementation, as well as sustained funding. Hence, multi-year funding is often necessary.

In addition, they also understand the importance of legal registration and possessing administrative and financial management skills in order to secure funding. This was also highlighted at the Packard Foundation's partners' meeting in Ambon in March 2024, where partners expressed their need for a locally based intermediary to help strengthen their capacity and access to funding.

¹⁷ Based on interview with C-M-01 and C-M-02

2.5 Support Infrastructure of CSOs and Networks

2.5.1 Accommodative Approach from Donors and Intermediaries

In Maluku and North Maluku, the enabling environment for CSOs has gradually improved due to the support of donor and intermediary organisations, which promote a more accommodative approach. These elements have become crucial in supporting infrastructures, enabling local CSOs to operate more effectively despite the region's complex socio-political and economic challenges. The collaborative approach of donors and intermediaries, alongside the growing recognition of the importance of local community engagement, has created an enabling environment that fosters greater participation, capacity building, and trust-building in CSO activities.

For example, during the partners' meeting in Ambon in 2024, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation captured suggestions and the need to establish a common platform and movement to strengthen local CSOs in Maluku. The initiative, dubbed Rumah Beta Belajar, is now in its planning stage. It aims to support capacity building and is projected to act as a local intermediary.

One key feature of donor support that creates an enabling environment is the flexible reporting systems and capacity-building programmes. This approach is adopted by donors, such as the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) through its intermediary partner, Burung Indonesia. These organisations have played a significant role in helping local CSOs build their capacity, particularly those without the technical expertise or infrastructure to manage large grants. The approach taken by these donors and intermediaries is flexible, offering direct assistance and capacity-building programmes that focus on enhancing the skills and operational effectiveness of local CSOs. Other donors perceived as accommodative include The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Blue Ventures.¹⁸

Unlike traditional donor expectations that often impose strict requirements, flexible reporting systems allow local CSOs to focus on delivering results without being overwhelmed by bureaucratic hurdles. This flexibility is essential for CSOs operating in regions with limited resources and technical capabilities, such as Maluku and North Maluku. Furthermore, these organisations offer capacity-building initiatives for local CSOs—such as project management training and mentorship, financial monitoring, and technical parts of their work—which help to enhance their organisational and operational capabilities. These efforts enable local CSOs to become more sustainable, enhancing their ability to seek future funding and administer long-term activities. It is worth noting that in the case of CEPF, such an approach is possible even when the funds mostly come from public funds,¹⁹ which typically require a more rigid reporting system.

¹⁸ Based on interview with informant I-03, I-10, C-M-03, and C-P-07

¹⁹ CEPF is a joint program of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

2.5.2 Trust Building with Local Communities and Leaders

Local CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku have recognised that establishing trust with local communities is fundamental to the success of their programmes. To achieve this, many CSOs prioritise a direct presence in the communities where they work, often living among the people they aim to serve. This immersion approach helps to build stronger relationships, making it easier to understand community needs, navigate local dynamics, and ensure the participation of local stakeholders in programme design and implementation.

According to our informants, many CSOs in Maluku and Maluku Utara adopt a bottom-up approach in program design and implementation in order to better engage with the local community. Many organisations require staff to live alongside target communities to build trust and truly understand the situation and their needs. This lays the foundation for more substantial outcomes and impact, even though it also requires a longer timeframe for project design and implementation, as well as a long-term commitment to funding.

The importance of community trust is also reflected in the increasing efforts by CSOs to engage with local leaders, such as traditional elders, *kewang* (customary forest guards), and *soa* (clan) heads. These leaders are key figures in Maluku and North Maluku, and their involvement ensures that CSOs work within the culturally sensitive frameworks of local governance and traditions. The growing awareness among CSOs of the need to engage local leaders early in the program design phase contributes to greater community ownership and sustainability of projects.

2.5.3 Network and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

The increasing recognition of multi-stakeholder forums as vital platforms for information exchange and collaboration has become another critical aspect of the support infrastructure. For example, the NGO consortium with the Maluku Provincial Marine and Fisheries Service has facilitated better cooperation between CSOs, local governments, and other fisheries and marine conservation stakeholders.

These forums provide a space for sharing knowledge, discussing common challenges, and coordinating actions that align with the broader development goals of the region. They also help local CSOs amplify their voice in policy discussions, particularly on issues that affect local livelihoods, environmental sustainability, and resource management. By engaging with both government and civil society in these forums, local CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku can push for policies more aligned with local needs and conditions, leading to more inclusive and effective governance. However, the sustainability of these partnerships relies heavily on local government's programmes and willingness of key officials to engage with CSOs. Thus, changes in government structure and officials can affect existing networks.

On the other hand, a more stable and long-lasting connection is found in networks of CSOs working on various issues, such as the Temu Rakyat Forum. We also identified potential CSOs that can act as local intermediaries for various thematic issues, such as Burung Indonesia, WALHI Maluku, and Maluku Utara for environmental issues; AMAN

for Indigenous People's rights; Kapal Perempuan for GEDSI issues; and Humanum for human rights and social movements.

2.5.4 Capacity Building and Legal Support

In Maluku and North Maluku, the enabling environment for CSOs has made strides, but significant challenges remain in building capacity to enhance their sustainability and effectiveness. While there has been progress in terms of increased awareness of the role CSOs play in advocating for social change, many local CSOs still operate informally, lacking legal registration or the administrative and operational infrastructure to manage larger projects and complex funding. This situation limits their ability to access diverse funding sources, engage meaningfully with government institutions, and expand their advocacy work.

Capacity-building programmes focusing on organisational development, legal registration, financial management, and governance are critical in helping these organisations become more legally recognised, financially viable, and institutionally sustainable. Efforts to formalise CSOs by helping them become legal entities enable them to access a broader range of funding sources and to engage more effectively with the government and other institutional partners. In particular, supporting these organisations to navigate the process of formalising their legal status is crucial for increasing their credibility and institutional strength.

Additionally, financial management and governance are other key areas where local CSOs need support. Enhancing the administrative capacity of local CSOs—including transparency in financial reporting and implementing sound organisational governance—will help build trust among donors, government agencies, and local communities, ensuring long-term sustainability. As organisations scale up their activities, it becomes increasingly important to establish effective financial systems that support larger and more complex projects.

Legal support is also a critical component for strengthening CSOs in Maluku and North Maluku. These organisations often face significant legal risks, especially when challenging powerful corporate interests or government policies.²⁰ Therefore, connecting local CSOs with legal aid services and establishing networks of legal professionals who can provide support in times of need is vital. This legal infrastructure will be crucial in helping CSOs navigate potential legal challenges—such as defamation suits, threats, and harassment—which can hinder their ability to advocate effectively.

²⁰ Based on interview with I-10 and confirmed through second FGD

Chapter 3

The State of the Civic Space in Papua



IN THIS CHAPTER

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3.1.1 Context of Papua

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3.3 Key Threats and Pressures on Civic Space

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3.5.5 Support for Coalition Building

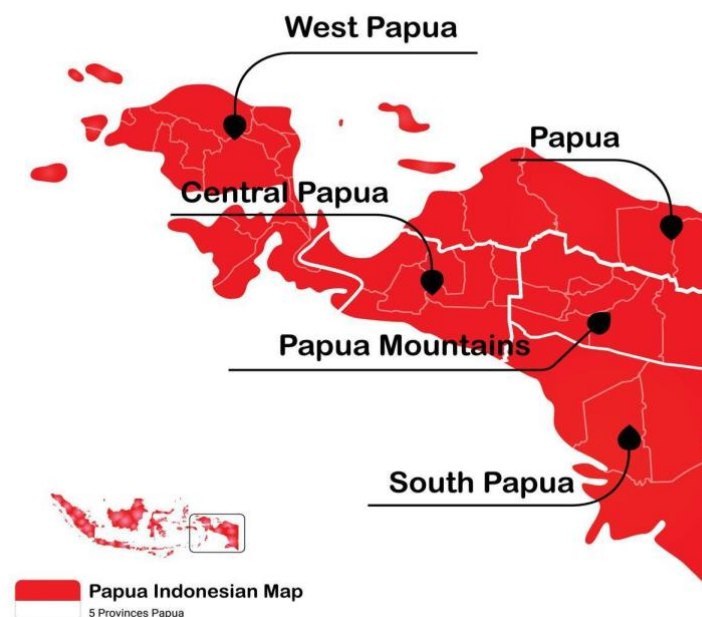
3.1 Overview

3.1.1 Context of Papua

To understand civic space in Papua, it is crucial to consider the region's broader political and economic context. Several interrelated factors shape the dynamics of civic engagement and social organisation in Papua.

First, complex conflict dynamics deeply influence the region. Papua has long been shaped by an unresolved conflict between Papuan nationalists advocating for independence and Indonesian nationalists promoting territorial unity (Chauvel & Bakti, 2004). This polarization, rooted in tensions dating back to the 1950s, has significantly impacted civic space (Chauvel, 2005). The central government's security-focused approach, including surveillance and military presence, often precedes development or dialogue. This has not only curtailed freedoms, but also limited the political representation of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) at regional and national levels.

Figure 4. Map of New Provinces of Papua



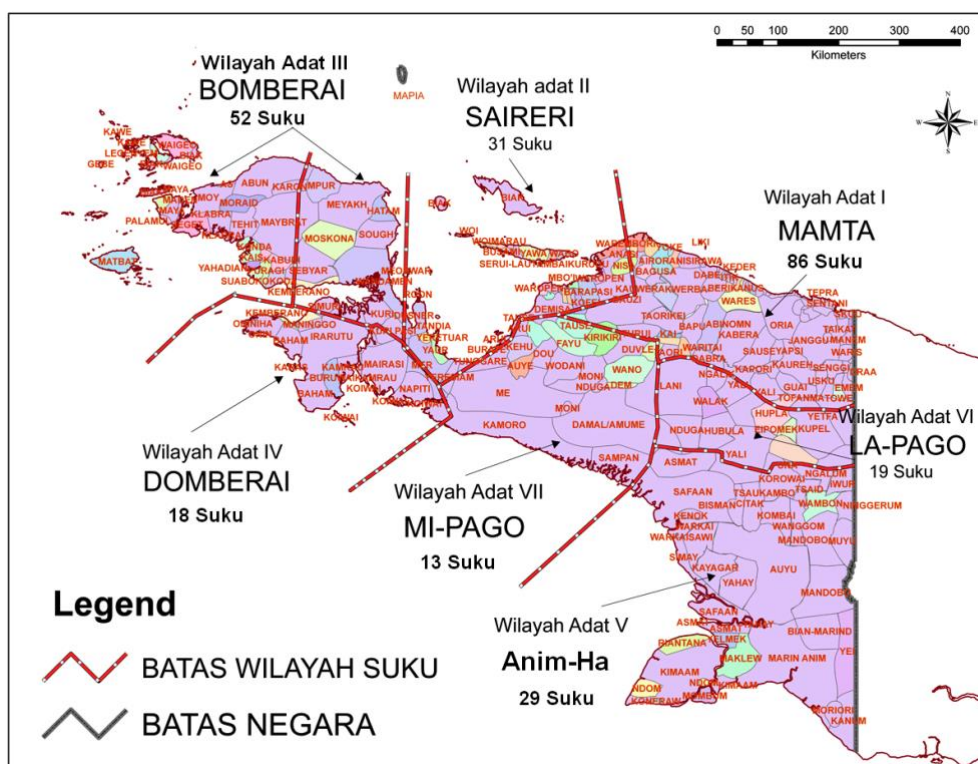
Source: Image generated by Vecteezy

Second, Papua's abundant natural resources and rich biodiversity define both its identity and challenges. Known as a "Land of Paradise," the region boasts vast reserves of copper, gold, nickel, other minerals, and primary forest. According to data from the Geospatial Information Agency (BIG) in 2023, the majority of Indonesia's forest area is located on Papua Island, covering 33.12 million hectares, or 32.2% of Indonesia's total forest cover, making Papua's forest the third largest in the world after the Amazon and Congo forests (Forest Watch Indonesia, 2024). The Bird's Head Seascape is globally recognised for its

vibrant coral reefs and diverse marine species, while its tropical forests host some of the world's most diverse bird and plant species (WRI, 2025). However, this wealth attracts extensive resource extraction, leading to deforestation, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss, complicating efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Third, the region faces challenges of accessibility and isolation. Papua's varied geography—encompassing coastal areas, highlands, and swampy lowlands—contributes to geographic isolation and limited community connectivity. Insufficient infrastructure increases transportation and logistics costs, making access to basic services and economic opportunities difficult for many residents. Strong clan-based affiliations foster close community bonds, but limited interaction across clans can sometimes lead to internal conflicts.

Figure 5. Map of Indigenous Territories of Papua



Source: Department of Anthropology Universitas Cendrawasih

Finally, administrative expansion (*pemekaran*) has significantly reshaped Papua. In 2004, Indonesia divided the region into two provinces: Papua in the east and West Papua in the west. By 2022, four additional provinces—South Papua, Central Papua, Mountains Papua, and Southwest Papua—were established through new legislation. These changes were intended to address Papuan aspirations, improved welfare, and enhanced public services. Today, Papua comprises four provinces, while West Papua has two. Conflict, natural resource abundance, geographic isolation, and administrative expansion create a uniquely challenging environment for civic space in Papua.

3.1.2 Overview of CSOs in Papua

According to our current database, Papua has more than 140 CSOs, indicating a relatively substantial presence of organisations in the region. However, the actual number is likely much higher, as many CSOs remain unregistered or operate informally within local networks. Identifying these organisations is challenging due to limited accessibility, the sensitive nature of their activities, and the unique socio-political environment in Papua. This often results in a fragmented understanding of the full scope of civil society engagement.

CSOs in Papua address a wide range of issues that reflect the region's historical, political, and cultural context. These include climate change, marine conservation, governance, indigenous rights to customary forests, access to education and healthcare, women's empowerment, democracy, human rights, and cultural preservation.²¹ Papua's complex political history imbues these issues with a strong political dimension, intertwining CSO activities with the region's socio-political dynamics. However, interviews suggest that most NGOs have shifted their focus toward environmental issues—such as climate and marine conservation and governance—aligning with donor funding priorities that channel significant resources into these areas.²²

Papua's CSOs are demographically diverse, comprising older, middle-aged, and younger generations of activists and leaders.²³ The region has an older generation of activists who began advocating for the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua, OAP), even before the Reformasi era or the introduction of special autonomy. Their efforts are deeply rooted in the struggle to represent OAP in the domains of democracy and human rights. Most of these senior activists are based in Jayapura or other parts of Papua Province. Alongside them is a middle generation of activists, generally mentored (*kaderisasi*) by an older generation. Some remain within the same organisations as their predecessors, whilst others have established new NGOs or CSOs. Younger participants have also emerged. They adopt innovative approaches, often forming informal networks and movements focused on culture and human rights. Youth-led organisations, such as Papuan Voice, frequently leverage cultural narratives, visual storytelling, literacy initiatives, and digital media to engage younger audiences. These efforts foster civic engagement and social awareness, effectively reaching young people who are often seen as disengaged from traditional forms of activism.²⁴

Regarding gender representation, some NGOs and CSOs in Papua, such as Harapan Ibu, Kelompok Kerja Wanita Papua, and PKBI, focus on women's issues. Others, including PT PPMA, PD Institute, and Yayasan Wasur Lestari, are led by women. However, overall representation of women in leadership remains limited. Male domination across CSOs in Papua continues to perpetuate significant barriers to gender equity in decision-making roles. This reflects broader gender disparities and a deeply rooted patriarchal culture in leadership roles throughout the region.

Geographically, CSOs in Papua are predominantly concentrated in urban centres, such as Jayapura, Manokwari, Merauke, Sorong, and Wamena. Jayapura serves as a central

²¹ Based on SMERU database and confirmed with interview with informants I-04, C-P-01, C-P-04, C-P-07, C-P-06, C-P-03, and C-P-05

²² Based on interview with informants D-01, I-01, and I-02

²³ The paragraph information based on interview data with all local CSO informants, including with young networks.

²⁴ Interview with informants C-P-09, confirmed with informant I-02.

hub for established organisations and is the base for many senior activists addressing diverse issues, including governance, politics, customary forests, and human rights. Notable organisations in Jayapura include FOKER, PT PPMA, Elsam Papua, Jubi, Yayasan KIPRA Papua, YALI, and Jerat Papua.²⁵ In Southern Papua, Merauke is emerging as a center for NGO activity, driven by increased awareness of environmental and social issues linked to corporate interests. Active organisations in this area include Yayasan Wasur Lestari, Perkumpulan Vertenten (SKP), Harmoni (affiliated with WWF), EDO, and Silva Papua Lestari.²⁶

In the mountainous highlands, such as Wamena and Timika, security concerns and logistical challenges significantly influence the activities of civil society organisations (CSOs). Only a few NGOs are active on human rights issues, such as Yayasan Humi Inane Jayawijaya (YHI), and in Timika, Yayasan Hak Asasi Manusia Anti Kekerasan (YAMAHAK) and Yayasan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Amungme dan Kamoro (YPMAM). Informants noted that organisations in these areas prioritise basic services, such as education and healthcare over politically sensitive advocacy. Faith-based organisations, often linked to churches, play a vital role in addressing service delivery gaps in areas with minimal government presence. In the highlands, there are also notable indigenous councils and customary community groups, including the Lembaga Musyawarah Adat Suku Amungme (Lemasa) and Kamoro in Timika, the Dewan Masyarakat Adat Momuna in Yahukimo, and the Welesi Adat community in Jayapura.²⁷

Informants highlighted that West Papua exhibits a more vibrant civil society scene, with a greater presence of younger generations within NGOs²⁸. Manokwari has become a home for CSOs working on climate change, marine conservation, and environmental governance, hosting groups such as Bentara Papua, Perdu, Mnukwar, Panah Papua, and Bicara Foundation. Sorong is home to established NGOs, such as Paradisea and Belantara Papua, alongside vibrant youth-led CSOs focused on literacy, education, and environmental initiatives, including Papua Berbagi, Perpustakaan Keliling Agape, and Maganan Misool. In Fakfak, although CSOs are limited in number, Gemapala is a well-known NGO, though its leadership recently experienced a loss with the passing of its leader.²⁹ Meanwhile, Biak is home to the established Yayasan Rumsram.³⁰

Despite the concentration of CSOs in urban areas, significant challenges persist in expanding their reach to remote and conflict-affected regions. The highlands, such as Yahukimo and Nduga, as well as inaccessible areas like Asmat, remain limited due to logistical constraints, security risks, and limited infrastructure. These barriers hinder CSOs' ability to expand their presence and deliver essential services to the most vulnerable communities, underscoring the ongoing struggle to ensure equitable civil society engagement across Papua.

²⁵ Based on SMERU database and confirmed with informants I-01, I02, and C-P-01

²⁶ Interview with informant C-P-06

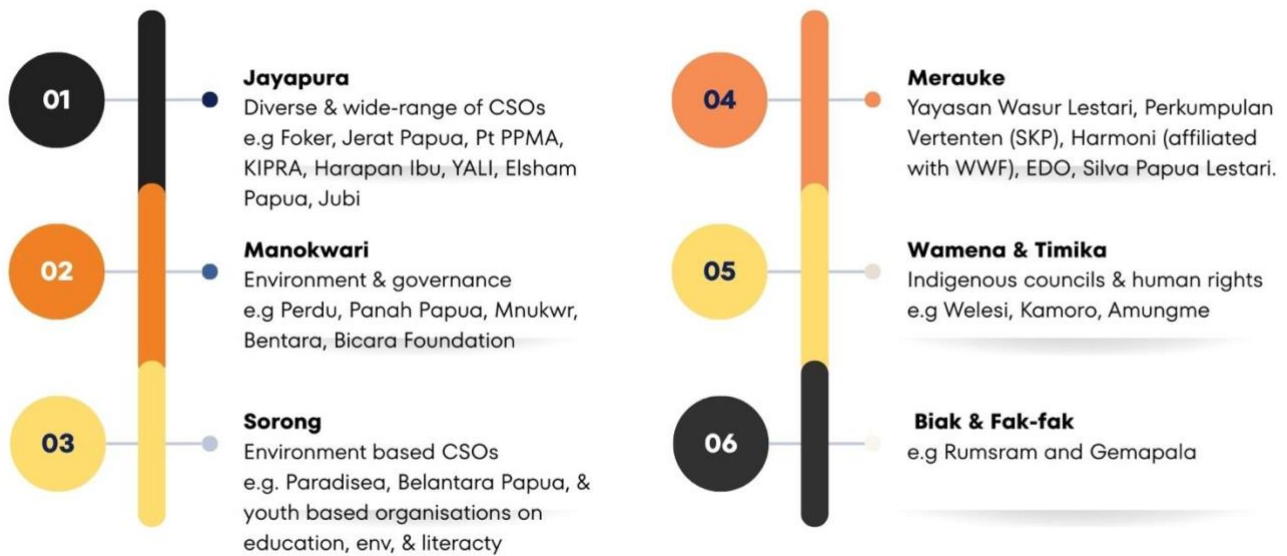
²⁷ Based on SMERU database and confirmed with informant C-P-01, C-P-03, and I-02Septer, Andi Saragih, and Daniel Kbarek

²⁸ Interview with informant I-02 and C-P-03

²⁹ Interview with informant I-02 and C-P-05

³⁰ Interview with informant I-02

Figure 6. Examples of CSOs in Papua Across Provinces



Source: Research team analysis

3.2 Perception of Civic Space in Papua

The concept of civic space in Papua is shaped by its conflict context. Unlike other regions, civic space in Papua cannot be described as "shrinking" because, as informants suggest, it was never genuinely established. One informant articulated this sentiment,

If we think of civic space as shrinking, the question is: shrinking from which condition? In Papua's context, it is not shrinking because it never really existed in the first place.³¹

The absence of civic space originates from decades of military operations, beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 1990s, during which opportunities for civic engagement were largely hindered by state control and military dominance.

Some informants observed shifts in the early 2000s, particularly under President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), when civil society experienced a slight opening. During the Reformasi era (1998–2000), a degree of openness emerged, albeit limited and tense. One informant reflected on the period,

So, if we look at the 1960s to the 1980s, there was essentially no civic space in Papua. We can understand this because, during that period, Papua was primarily used for military operations. Then, with the Reform Era from 1998 to 2000, there was a significant shift where space began to open up. From the 1960s to 1998, it was so repressed and silenced. But then, what happened? The state provided some space in 1998. Even though there was still tension here and there, people began to emerge. Movements appeared everywhere, and people started to consolidate themselves.³²

³¹ Interview with informant C-P-07. This statement is also shared by informants C-P-01, C-P-02, D-05, and C-P-04

³² Interview with informant C-P-01

However, informants emphasised that shifts in political leadership, including changes in the presidency, have done little to alleviate ongoing conflicts and insecurity.³³ One informant remarked,

In Papua, there is no such thing as a favorable time or a bad time [...] from one administration to the next, no matter who the president is, there is no [change] or influence in Papua. Sometimes it is safe, sometimes it is not. Papuans have already acclimated to this.³⁴

We identified specific sectors, such as climate-related initiatives and community development, as having relatively more civic space due to less surveillance by the central government. Our informants report that government restrictions, such as screening activities, are less stringent in these areas. This implies that NGOs can execute their plans with reduced risks,

So, if we want to focus on economic or climate justice, it might be safer. Whereas, the root of the problems faced by our friends in Papua, if we look at it, goes back to the New York Agreement of 1963 and Government Regulation 1969—it is a very long history."³⁵

However, they noted areas of concern, such as the intersection of conservation work with corporate or customary forest interests, where there is heightened surveillance. Informants described the pervasive presence of intelligence agents (known as *intel*) as a critical challenge,

So far, in our [conservation] work, there has not been [intimidation], but friends have already warned us to be cautious because, well, maybe there is BAIS [Badan Intelijen Strategis or Strategic Intelligence Agency] or something that has already here. Intelligence agency or something?³⁶

Despite these challenges, the resilience of Papuan civil society is evident. Informants frequently shared narratives like “we are used to it” or “we just laugh when asked if it is safe,” demonstrating their adaptation to a security-first approach. They have developed strategies to navigate these restrictions, including recognising the presence of intelligence agents, conducting informal meetings, and choosing safe venues and transportation. Some have even learned to communicate tactically with intelligence agents when necessary.³⁷

Crucially, informants stressed that the limited civic space available today is not the result of government reforms, but of sustained and strategic efforts by CSOs. Through innovation and caution, these groups have maintained their advocacy, underscoring the determination of Papuan civil society. As one informant succinctly put it, the current state of civic space “is not a gift from the government but a hard-fought outcome”, born from their continuing efforts to challenge systemic constraints and restrictions.³⁸

However, Papuan CSOs also grapple with significant internal challenges, including administrative fragmentation and difficulties securing sustainable funding (discussed

³³ Interview with informant C-P-01, C-P-02, C-P-03, and C-P-07

³⁴ Interview with informant C-P-02

³⁵ Interview with informant D-01

³⁶ Interview with informant C-P-06. This statement is also informant C-P-04 concern

³⁷ Interview with informant C-P-02, C-P-05, C-P-04, C-P-03, and C-P-01

³⁸ Interview with informant C-P-07. This statement is also shared by informant C-P-01 and C-P-03

further in the coalition-building support section). These issues threaten their ability to maintain momentum and effectively address the pressing social and political problems they face.

3.3 Key Threats and Pressures on Civic Space

Various threats, including the ongoing implementation of a security-focused approach, regulatory restrictions on international funding for operations in Papua, defamation laws, corporate threats, and stagnating regional growth, pose serious challenges to civic space in Papua.

Informants highlighted that Papua's long-standing history of conflict continues to influence the restrictions and surveillance imposed by the central government. Military and police operations frequently enforce these measures, sustaining a security-first approach that fosters an environment of constant scrutiny. Civil society actors remain cautious, as the legacy of past intelligence operations continues to reinforce a culture of vigilance. To navigate these restrictions, many CSOs have adapted by holding informal and closed-door engagements, minimising visibility to avoid drawing undue attention.³⁹ This dynamic is further explored in the section discussing CSO resilience and strategies in conflict situations.

Our informants from local CSOs focusing on democracy and human rights have expressed strong criticism of government policies that uphold a security-oriented approach in Papua. These policies severely restrict activities in politically sensitive areas, particularly those related to democracy and human rights. Organisations seeking to hold events must navigate rigorous screening processes to avoid attracting the attention of intelligence agencies. Consequently, this environment has pushed many groups to rely on private, invite-only gatherings, significantly limiting public participation and engagement. Such constraints undermine the ability of CSOs to foster open dialogue and mobilise broader community support.⁴⁰

In addition to these restrictions, the government continues to suppress the flow of information from Papua, despite advances in media and communication technologies. Informants pointed out that locally produced, accurate information is scarce, while Papuan CSOs underutilise digital tools, such as social media and online platforms.⁴¹ This limited digital presence hampers their ability to share narratives, raise awareness, and advocate effectively for pressing issues. The suppression of information, coupled with limited digital engagement, creates a major obstacle to amplifying Papuan CSOs' voices at national or global scale. One informant (undisclosed) warned that the government had

³⁹ Most informants from local CSOs, intermediaries, and donors shared this statement (D-01, I-04, D-02, , D-05 , C-P-02, C-P-01, C-P-04, C-P-03, C-P-05, I-10, C-P-07)

⁴⁰ Interview with informants C-P-01, , C-P-02, C-P-03, C-P-04, and C-P-13

⁴¹ Interview with informants C-P-03 and I-10

recently acquired Pegasus which used for surveillance tool.⁴² What is most alarming about Pegasus is that it does not require users' permission to access their devices.

Student demonstrations represent another domain where government control is starkly evident. Although civil space is nominally guaranteed in official policies, informants described a reality of widespread suppression. One senior CSO informant remarked,

While civil space is mentioned in official texts, the reality is quite the opposite—it is silenced everywhere. For instance, when students try to organise a demonstration, they follow protocol by submitting a notification letter, not a permit. But even before the demonstration begins, they are blocked at every turn. These restrictions extend to other activities as well. Often, when we organise events, many uninvited guests show up.⁴³

This highlights the persistent obstacles individuals and groups face when attempting to exercise their democratic rights.

Further compounding these challenges is the subtle infiltration of intelligence agencies into youth movements through funding and project involvement. Programmes such as the Papua Creative Hub have become focal points of concern. According to an informant from an intermediary organisation,

For instance, there is the Papua Creative Hub. It is all funded and organised by BIN [State Intelligence Agency]. This is openly stated at the development office itself. They fund the programmes and control everything, with the youth involved often subjected to heavy indoctrination. Many do not last long in these programmes—some leave due to intimidation, while others face ongoing threats.⁴⁴

Regulatory frameworks also pose additional challenges to CSO operations in Papua. Donor organisations and intermediaries identified restrictions on funding and programme implementation as major barriers.⁴⁵ Laws, such as the Guidelines for the Registration Procedures of Foreign Community Organisations Operating in Indonesia (Law No. 37 of 1999 and Law No. 17 of 2013), require foreign CSOs to partner with government agencies and prohibit them from engaging in political activities. Donors widely acknowledge that securing programme approval from relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), often entails lengthy processes with ambiguous requirements. This creates significant challenges for organisations working in conflict-prone regions like Papua.⁴⁶ One informant explained,

Papua cannot be approached with a governance agreement because it is a sensitive issue, and others handle that area. Most of the work in non-governance packets involves direct engagement with CSOs to strengthen CSOs. However, with governance agreement packets, it is with local CSOs, but they must partner with the government. For Papua specifically, the approach by USAID is through collaboration with Bappenas. As long as Bappenas agrees, there is no issue. For other areas, partnerships might involve

⁴² Interview with informant I-10

⁴³ Interview with informant C-P-01

⁴⁴ Interview with informants I-01 and this statement is also shared by informant C-P-01

⁴⁵ Interview with donor organisations and intermediaries (D-02, D-04, and I-04))

⁴⁶ Kemenlu. "PEDOMAN PROSEDUR REGISTRASI BAGI ORGANISASI KEMASYARAKATAN ASING YANG BERKEGIATAN DI INDONESIA", accessed from <https://ingo.kemlu.go.id/index.php/requirements>

ministries like health, environment, or law and human rights—sectors considered non-sensitive by the Indonesian government, not by the U.S. government.⁴⁷

Informants from donor and intermediary groups also identified MoHA as a particularly difficult agency, largely due to its stringent security protocols. One informant explained,

The MoHA is the most difficult one, with many restrictions. Papua is particularly hard to access, especially when addressing political issues. It takes much longer to obtain permits. While we try to avoid having MoHA as our reference government partner, they are sometimes unavoidable.⁴⁸

Another donor interaction highlights these similar concerns,

One donor insisted we meet with MoHA for scrutiny. We refused, as we also work with changemakers and vulnerable groups from marginalised communities. If this data were leaked, we would be held accountable. This even led to an interview by the State Intelligence Agency [BIN]. Ultimately, we chose not to collaborate with that donor.⁴⁹

Indonesia's defamation laws, including provisions in the Criminal Code (Law No. 1 of 2023) and the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (Law No. 11 of 2008, or ITE Law), have also become barriers for changemakers and CSOs working to amplify the voices of marginalised communities and individuals.⁵⁰ These laws limit organisations from raising concerns about governance, human rights violations, or environmental degradation for fear of legal reprisal. Activists who expose corruption, corporate environmental harm, or human rights abuses by security forces are often targeted with lawsuits or criminal investigations. These legal challenges divert resources and attention, often resulting in prolonged and costly legal battles.

The ITE Law, particularly the defamation article, impacts our work and leads to self-censorship. Even though we want to speak out more boldly about certain issues, we must also consider safety. This makes us think, 'Maybe we should not approach it from this angle; it needs to be softened with humor or memes to make it seem harmless.' So, there is self-censorship at play. Additionally, some organisations prefer to remain neutral. For instance, they might provide funding but do not want their name to appear as visibly supporting the issue.⁵¹

In the environmental sector, palm oil corporations represent a primary threat to Indigenous communities. Unlike state actors who employ surveillance or policy restrictions, corporations use intimidation, coercion, and financial incentives to sow division within indigenous communities. This deliberate fragmentation disrupts community solidarity and weakens collective resistance, thereby undermining the efforts of NGOs advocating for sustainable practices.⁵² An informant from a local CSO working to protect customary forests mentioned,

In the 1990s, community assistance work was always under surveillance; intelligence agents were always monitoring us when we worked with communities. Today, when working in areas with ongoing investments, we face the same level of scrutiny.

⁴⁷ Interview with D-04

⁴⁸ Interview with I-20

⁴⁹ Interview with D-01

⁵⁰ Interview with I-10

⁵¹ Interview with I-10

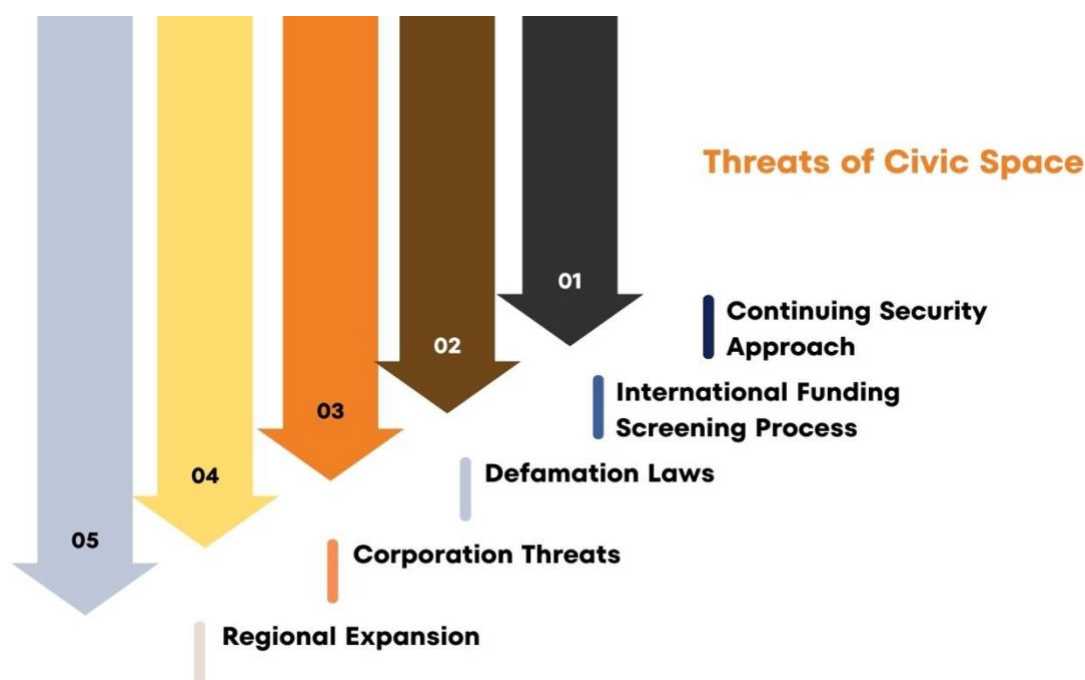
⁵² Interview with informants C-P-04 and C-P-06

Companies exert pressure through community members aligned with their interests, instilling fear among the broader community. This fear ultimately disrupts the CSO's work. Companies perceive the presence of CSOs as a threat, fearing that communities may become more critical and take actions that could obstruct corporate activities.⁵³

Informants also highlighted regional expansion (*pemekaran*) as an increasing threat to civil society cohesion. Although intended to improve governance closer to local communities, *pemekaran* often fragments CSO networks. Newly created administrative regions introduce logistical complexities, reduce inter-organisational coordination, and weaken collective power. Informants reported a noticeable weakening in the strength and visibility of civil society movements in areas affected by regional expansion. This was because priorities were becoming more split up, and there was not as much communication between the new regions.⁵⁴ As one informant noted,

Actually, what is happening is that the military presence is growing stronger here, with more personnel being deployed. The approach is becoming increasingly forceful, especially in the six newly established regencies where deployment was expedited. It is quite intense. It is downright alarming in some regencies—hardly anyone left. Competent individuals are being pulled to the provincial level, leaving the regencies empty.⁵⁵

Figure 7. The Cycle of Threats and Surveillance in Papua



Source: Research team analysis

⁵³ Interview with informant C-P-04

⁵⁴ Interview with informants I-01 and I-02

⁵⁵ Interview with informant I-01

3.4 Opportunities and Challenges for CSOs

Despite threats to Papuan civic space, Papua has attracted substantial funding from various sources due to its unique status as a forest reserve, a resource-rich region, and a recipient of special autonomy (*otonomi khusus*, *Otsus*) funds. Since the introduction of *Otsus*, funding streams from bilateral and multilateral donors and international philanthropic organisations have contributed to Papua's development. However, the funding ecosystem is fraught with challenges. These include inequitable access, administrative barriers, and stakeholder tensions.

Bilateral donors, such as USAID and Australia's DFAT, prioritise Papua within their broader initiatives. For instance, USAID Kolaborasi (2022–2027), a \$10 million programme, aims to optimise the use of *Otsus* funds in addressing local needs.⁵⁶ Similarly, DFAT's SKALA programme focuses on governance and public administration across Eastern Indonesia.⁵⁷ Other bilateral contributors, include Norway, which supports environmental initiatives, and the UK Climate Change Unit (UKCCU), which focuses on climate governance. Multilateral and bilateral donors, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Norwegian Aid, have funded forest conservation and emission reduction projects.⁵⁸

International philanthropic organisations also play a role. The Open Society Foundations (OSF) target democracy and human rights, while the David and Lucile Packard Foundation supports environmental and marine conservation ecosystems. Although some donors, like the Ford Foundation, have exited Papua, others, such as the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA), remain active.⁵⁹ UNICEF also provides funding for activities in Papua, including in Wamena.⁶⁰ Church funding has also become a significant resource for CSOs, particularly in conflict-affected areas, such as the mountainous regions in Wamena.⁶¹

One of the most significant challenges for local CSOs in Papua is the inequitable access to funding. Many small or under-resourced organisations face difficulties meeting the rigorous administrative and reporting standards imposed by donors, often designed to align with organisational standards. While ensuring accountability, these standards inadvertently exclude grassroots organisations lacking the capacity and resources to comply. Consequently, most donor funding is channelled through intermediaries, which are better equipped to fulfil these requirements.⁶²

Almost all donor funding to Papua, particularly from multilateral and bilateral donors, flows through intermediaries, which are predominantly national NGOs. Examples include EcoNusa, WRI, TAF, BAKTI, Samdhana, Kurawal, Penabulu, Humanis, Kemitraan, and YAPPIKA. Most of these organisations are based in the Jakarta metropolitan area, with a few in Makassar. These intermediaries perform diverse roles, including regranteeing and capacity building (e.g., TAF, Kurawal, BAKTI), networking, and technical support

⁵⁶ Based on USAID website and interview with informant D-04

⁵⁷ Interview with informant I-08

⁵⁸ Interview with informant I-04

⁵⁹ Interview with informants D-01, D-02, and I-04.

⁶⁰ Interview with informant C-P-01

⁶¹ Interview with informant D-05

⁶² Interview with all informants from donor and intermediaries

(e.g., Samdhana and WRI). Informants identified certain intermediaries, such as WRI and EcoNusa, which also directly implement projects.

Only a few donors channel funds directly to local CSOs.⁶³ These are primarily philanthropic organisations, such as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Open Society Foundation. These direct funding approaches are rare, but highly valued by local CSOs. Philanthropic donors are often able to adopt direct funding models due to their relatively flexible rules and the capacity to offer small grants. Unlike multilateral and bilateral donors, which usually operate under rigid frameworks defined by government agreements and international standards, philanthropic organisations have greater autonomy to tailor their funding processes to the specific needs of local contexts. This flexibility enables them to bypass intermediaries and engage directly with local CSOs, fostering partnerships more responsive to grassroots priorities.

Philanthropic donors also tend to work with smaller grant sizes, which are more manageable for local CSOs that may lack the administrative capacity to handle large, complex funding arrangements. Additionally, the reporting requirements for philanthropic funding are often less burdensome, emphasising impact and outcomes, rather than compliance with extensive procedural mandates. This approach reduces barriers for local organisations, allowing them to focus more on implementing their programmes and achieving their goals.

While intermediaries are critical to the funding process, their relationships with local CSOs are often complex. Some informants highlighted the benefits of intermediaries, such as their ability to navigate administrative requirements, channel funds, and provide technical assistance like GIS mapping for customary forests or training in gender mainstreaming. However, others expressed concerns about perceived inequalities, with intermediaries seen disproportionately benefiting from donor funding while sidelining local grassroots priorities.⁶⁴

Some CSOs also recognise that many national CSOs are often chosen as intermediaries because they possess stronger administrative capacities than local CSOs. However, local CSOs emphasise that their deep understanding of local issues, context, and expertise in organising indigenous communities often surpasses that of national CSOs. Unfortunately, administrative capacity frequently overshadows substantive expertise, placing local CSOs at a perceived disadvantage. This dynamic is further reinforced by terms like “strategic partner,” which can subtly diminish the value and capacity of local CSOs.⁶⁵

This dynamic reinforces fragmentation within Papua’s civil society. While intermediaries are essential for managing funds and providing capacity-building support, their dominance can create tensions. Local CSOs frequently feel excluded from direct donor engagement, limiting their autonomy and aligning funded activities with local priorities.⁶⁶ The dependency on intermediaries also hinders the long-term sustainability of local organisations. Capacity building is urgently needed to address these challenges. Training

⁶³ Interview with D-01, D-05, C-P-04 and C-P-07

⁶⁴ Interview with informants C-P-02, C-P-03, C-P-04, C-P-04, C-P-05, C-P-07

⁶⁵ Interview with informants C-P-02, C-P-03, C-P-04, C-P-04, C-P-05, C-P-07

⁶⁶ Interview with informants C-P-02, C-P-03, C-P-04, C-P-04, C-P-05, C-P-07

programmes focused on administrative skills, governance, and donor engagement could help local CSOs operate more effectively and compete for funding independently.

Informants also emphasised the issue of wage disparities between intermediary organisations and local CSOs.⁶⁷ Intermediary organisations, which often manage donor funds on behalf of smaller, community-based CSOs, frequently allocate the resources available to organisations, but also exacerbate a significant wage gap. Staff at intermediary organisations typically earn much higher salaries than those working in smaller, grassroots CSOs. According to CSO informants, this disparity perpetuates inequality within the sector and undermines the capacity and sustainability of local CSOs, further hindering their ability to attract and retain skilled personnel.

Relationships among CSOs, intermediaries, and donors reveal additional complexities. Intermediaries are often perceived as more aligned with donor agendas than Papua's socio-political and cultural needs. This disconnect sometimes leads to competition between intermediaries and local CSOs, particularly when intermediaries directly implement projects rather than empowering local actors. In this case, intermediaries who act as implementers without offering opportunities for capacity building or redistribution to local CSOs have faced criticism from CSOs in Papua, creating tension as they are perceived as greedy. Informants also noted that intermediaries often lack an understanding of Papua's specific context, including communication styles and administrative limitations. Administrative challenges, such as framing and reporting in Indonesian or English, contribute to the perception that intermediaries view local CSOs as inferior.⁶⁸

Donors and intermediaries often emphasise bureaucratic processes that clash with the traditional practices and operational capacities of Papuan CSOs.⁶⁹ Although designed to ensure accountability and effective use of funds, these rigid requirements can inadvertently exclude local organisations, perpetuating a cycle of dependency on intermediaries. Many CSOs in Papua struggle to navigate these complex processes due to limited capacity in areas like financial management, reporting, and compliance with donor-imposed administrative frameworks.

Some CSOs have sought to bypass intermediaries by securing direct funding from donors, as they believe this route could provide greater autonomy and flexibility.⁷⁰ However, this approach demands high levels of administrative proficiency and strategic positioning, such as building relationships with donors, crafting compelling proposals, and ensuring rigorous compliance with funding guidelines. Unfortunately, many local organisations lack these skills and resources, challenging direct engagement with donors. Therefore, we urgently need for targeted skill-building initiatives in areas, such as financial management, proposal development, and reporting to empower Papuan CSOs and improve their project execution skills, as discussed in the landscape and support section.

This sentiment underscores a broader issue faced by Papuan CSOs: the struggle to balance accountability with the need for locally tailored, substantive initiatives. An overemphasis on administrative formalities hinders creativity and diminishes the

⁶⁷ Interview with informants C-P-03, C-P-04, C-P-04, C-P-05, C-P-07

⁶⁸ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-03, and C-P-07

⁶⁹ Interview with informants I-01, I-02, I-04 and also confirmed by donor (D-01)

⁷⁰ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-02, C-P-03 and C-P-07

effectiveness of civil society efforts by diverting critical time and energy from community-focused activities to navigating bureaucratic hurdles.

Examples like the David and Lucile Packard Foundation demonstrate the potential for a more inclusive approach to donor-CSO relationships. Packard directly funds local organisations and engages them in strategic discussions about long-term sustainability and organisational growth. This approach fosters ownership and accountability while building local capacity. An informant noted,

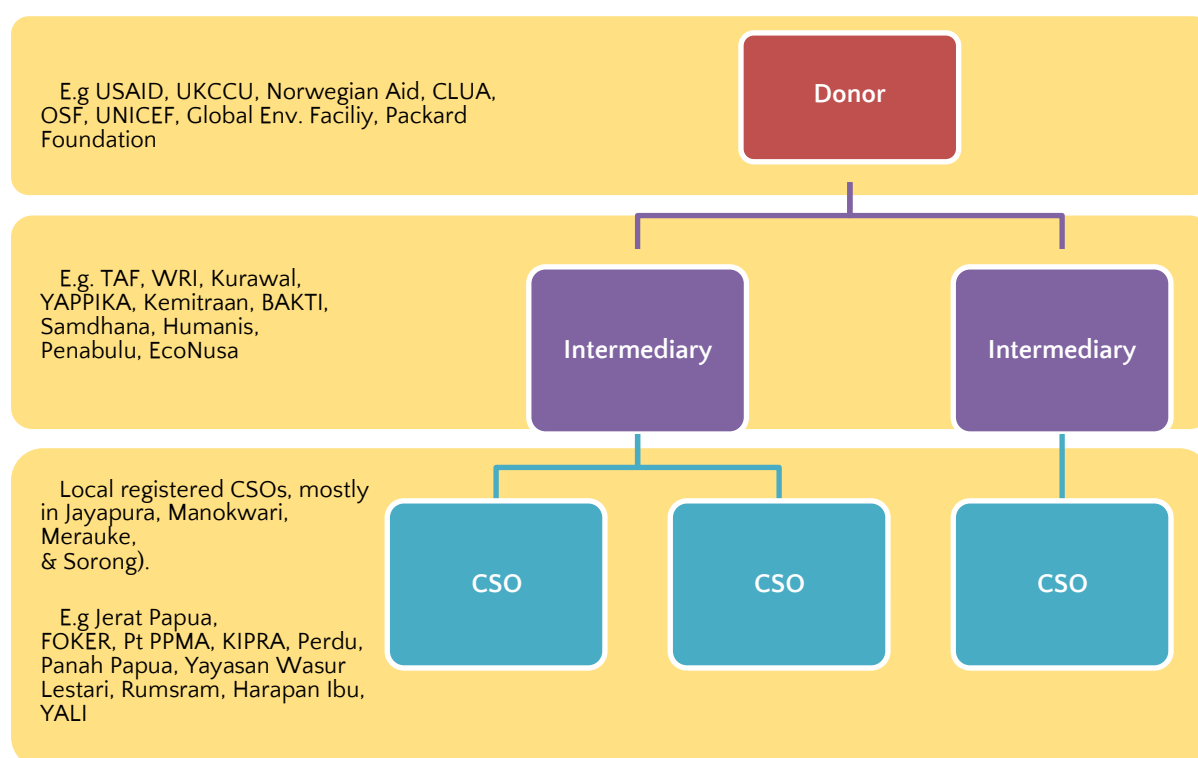
Packard's individuals like Mas Joko and Pak James contribute significantly—not just through funding but by raising critical questions about how we position ourselves for the future. These informal discussions prompted us to rethink our strategic planning and explore ways to position ourselves as intermediaries.⁷¹

Similarly, OSF and Kurawal have been praised for their adaptability and commitment to tailoring support to the local context. By offering mentorship and fostering sustainability among partner organisations, Kurawal exemplifies the importance of flexibility and collaboration.

This funding dynamic significantly influences the civic space in Papua. It is not solely shaped by state security policies, but also by the relationships between donors, intermediaries, and local CSOs. Intermediaries, acting as service providers, regrants, and implementers, have varying roles that sometimes overlap and compete. While these relationships bring resources into Papua, they also highlight the need for greater equity, transparency, and capacity building to ensure local CSOs are better positioned to address the region's unique challenges.

⁷¹ Interview with informant C-P-07. This statement is also shared by informant C-P-04.

Figure 8. Funding Dynamics in Eastern Indonesia's Civil Society



Source: Research team analysis

3.5 Support Infrastructure of CSOs and Networks

3.5.1 Essential Legal Aid Support for CSOs

In conflict situations, as described in the perception of civic state condition, CSOs in Papua demonstrate resilience and adaptability through various strategies. Many informants explained that they are accustomed to navigating conflict and remaining alert to signs suggesting the presence of intelligence agents.

For instance, they pay close attention to the profiles of individuals suspected to be intelligence operatives (BAIS or Strategic Intelligence Agency) during workshops or public spaces, such as public transportation. They avoid using public transportation or rented vehicles, instead opting for those they trust. They are also cautious about where they park in public to prevent issues, such as flat tires or other sabotage problems.

Additionally, they are careful in maintaining secure communication channels, often avoiding platforms like WhatsApp or email. Instead, they prefer encrypted communication tools, such as Signal, or choose to hold informal face-to-face meetings in secure and discreet settings. Many have established protocols for handling pressure, including safety measures and identifying trusted individuals who can be contacted in

emergencies.⁷² An informant from a national CSO, who serves as an active intermediary on the environmental and human rights issue in Papua, also emphasised that those working on Papuan issues must always safeguard their credibility and comply with Indonesian laws, such as paying taxes properly, to avoid issues that the government could potentially use against them.⁷³

Despite these precautions, legal aid emerges as one of the most critical forms of support for CSOs, particularly those advocating for democracy, defending human rights, or addressing the social and environmental consequences of corporate activities. Prominent organisations, such as ELSHAM Papua, LBH, and Amnesty International play a vital role in providing legal assistance.

Furthermore, the study identifies several lesser-known organisations, including a faith-based donor institution, a nationally based NGO in Jakarta, and a philanthropic donor organisation based outside Indonesia, all of which offer legal aid and protection for activists. However, their identities are withheld to protect the safety of informants and beneficiaries. These organisations support local CSOs and activists working on human rights issues at the grassroots level, help amplify local CSOs' voices, and provide grants for promoting democracy locally.

One informant highlighted that these organisations often use creative strategies to mitigate risks, such as holding meetings abroad to avoid intense surveillance. They demonstrate high expertise in managing security challenges, including in countering digital and physical monitoring.

However, despite their efforts, the reach of these legal aid services remains limited. Many activists and CSOs operating in conflict-affected zones lack adequate legal protection—a problem compounded by the high costs associated with legal services and the heightened risks in corporate control. In such regions, access to resources related to democracy and human rights is often minimal or entirely unavailable.

Beyond legal aid, structural and logistical barriers further constrain the activities of CSOs in Papua. The challenges are particularly acute in remote areas, where ongoing conflict and inadequate infrastructure hinder operations. While digital tools have increasingly gained traction in urban centers like Jayapura and Sorong—providing youth and activists with mechanisms to navigate security challenges in human rights advocacy and to leverage human rights movements—such resources remain inaccessible in many rural and conflict-affected areas.

There is notable potential in leveraging community-based local media to enhance oversight of local issues and strengthen civil movements. Platforms, such as grassroots or “homeless” media, have shown promise as tools in amplifying the voices of marginalised communities that often excluded from mainstream narratives. However, the use of such platforms is fraught with risks due to the lack of security infrastructure, including CCTV, robust data protection systems, and adequate legal frameworks to safeguard activists. These gaps significantly elevate the vulnerabilities of those involved in such initiatives.⁷⁴

⁷² Interviews with informants C-P-01, C-P-04, and C-P-13

⁷³ Interview with informant I-09

⁷⁴ Interview with informants C-P-04 and I-10

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires urgent and strategic interventions. Dedicated donor funding is essential to bolster the safety and security of CSOs. One informant emphasised,

If donors truly care about sustaining this movement, they must prioritise funding for protection—whether through physical security measures or digital training that helps safeguard us from threats.⁷⁵

Such funding would not only enhance the safety of activists and organisations, but also ensure the resilience and continuity of civil society movements under the pressures of conflict and persistent security threats. However, implementing new safety and security strategies, especially by donors, may face initially encounter resistance due to longstanding distrust, surveillance practices, and familiarity with the existing status quo. These safety measures may face challenges, such as resistance to change and a lack of familiarity with the new practices. Nevertheless, with continued support and growing confidence in the effectiveness of these preventative measures, CSOs can begin to shift toward more proactive approaches to safety and security.

3.5.2 Administrative Challenges as Key Barriers to Strengthening CSOs

Administrative challenges are a persistent issue that significantly hinders CSOs in Papua. Donor funding often flows through intermediaries rather than directly to CSOs, primarily due to these obstacles. Informants and donor representatives identified financial management as the most critical barrier to partnering with Papuan CSOs.⁷⁶ These administrative issues also prevent many CSOs from meeting the basic requirements needed to access funding. For instance, the lack of legal documents, such as foundation or association deeds, makes formal registration difficult.

Additionally, the absence of audit records further disqualifies organisations from funding opportunities. One informant highlighted these barriers,

For example, if we want to build something, is it possible? Some donors require detailed proposals with clear monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks. Unfortunately, our friends in smaller organisations (in Papua) often lack that capacity."⁷⁷

Local CSOs themselves, including informants from established NGOs, emphasise that are a primary obstacle to accessing funding.⁷⁸ They often find these processes overwhelming, increasingly complex, and strict. As one informant pointed out, these administrative demands frequently overshadow substantive issues. This mismatch is particularly pronounced in Papua, where many small CSOs lack educational and administrative training, rendering such requirements out of context and impractical. One informant shared their perspective,

⁷⁵ Interview with informant C-P-07

⁷⁶ Interview with informants I-01, I-02, I-04 and D-01

⁷⁷ Interview with informant D-01

⁷⁸ Interview with all local CSOs informants

The administrative procedures are extremely rigid and burdensome. It is not that we oppose good governance or accountability—those are essential. But the focus should not revolve solely around administration. There needs to be space for substantive issues, too.⁷⁹

Informants suggest that donors and intermediaries should view limited administrative capacity as an area for targeted support or capacity building rather than a barrier. Some intermediaries and donors have received recognition for their efforts to enhance the capacity of Papuan CSOs. These initiatives include simplifying proposal and reporting templates, offering tailored training, and providing consistent, hands-on assistance throughout project implementation. They have proven effective in helping CSOs build stronger administrative foundations.

While still limited, capacity-building support does exist. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, for instance, is renowned for its straightforward and flexible reporting requirements.⁸⁰ Similarly, the Asia Foundation (TAF) has adapted its approach. Initially rigid, TAF revised its financial reporting templates to make them more user-friendly by integrating straightforward software tools. One informant explained,

Eventually, we reflected internally on how best to support our partners so that reporting doesn't become a burden for them.⁸¹

However, not everyone views intermediaries as helpful. Some intermediaries adopt a rigid, binary approach to administrative regulations, providing limited opportunities for smaller CSOs to acquire knowledge and develop. This rigidity can hinder newer organisations in their efforts to build capacity. One informant said,

Some intermediaries treat it as black and white—either you meet all the requirements, or you are out. There is no room for growth or learning, and it hinders smaller CSOs [which] just starting.⁸²

Local CSOs in Papua face significant challenges in producing transparent and accountable financial reports that meet donor standards. While some CSOs understand the importance of financial accountability, many still lack the skills and standardised practices to manage and report on funds effectively. Informants point out that high staff turnover, particularly among financial personnel, exacerbates this issue. Low salaries and the instability of NGO work contribute to frequent departures. In addition, interference from directors or senior staff, including misappropriation of funds for personal use, is common.

The limited administrative capacity of local CSOs is closely tied to Papua's unique context, including a low Human Development Index (HDI) and restricted access to quality education. Financial accountability is also hindered by traditional customs, where practices such as giving gifts in cash or material form to build patronage are prevalent⁸³,

⁷⁹ Interview with informant C-P-04

⁸⁰ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-04, and C-P-07

⁸¹ Interview with informant I-02

⁸² Interview with informants C-P-04 and C-P-07

⁸³ Strengthened by studies on leadership and political culture in Melanesia, particularly in Papua New Guinea (e.g. Ketan, 2000)

and financial literacy remains limited within the community. Local CSOs face challenges in producing transparent and accountable financial reports that meet donor standards.⁸⁴

Thus, administrative capacity in Papua is not a straightforward issue. It goes beyond basic accounting and administrative reporting systems and includes challenges related to access to education, financial literacy, and the intersection with traditional customs. Effective organisational management and technical capacity require distinct expertise, but governance and organisational management are even more nuanced and complex. These tasks involve understanding the cultural context, bridging gaps in education, and managing systems that align with local traditions while ensuring transparency and accountability.

Financial transparency is also linked to central government regulations requiring public reporting of activities and finances. However, transparency in financial reporting to the public remains very limited, not only among CSOs in Eastern Indonesia, including Papua, but also across Indonesia. The issue of public financial transparency is related to the challenges of CSO survival. Many CSOs engage in internal saving efforts to ensure their sustainability, which are difficult to report transparently to the public.⁸⁵

Despite these challenges, Papua has potential CSOs that could serve as intermediaries for capacity-building and regranting mechanisms, with support and assistance from donors. For regranting, the most suitable organisations are those with strong financial management experience, good reporting practices, networks with grassroots organisations (local CSOs), and long-established institutions such as KIPRA, Jerat Papua, Yayasan Wasur Lestari, and Perdu.

For capacity building, key CSOs include:

- **PT PPMA** for indigenous community organizing;
- **PD Institute** for Research Development;
- **Jubi** for investigative work and media writing;
- **LEKAT** (a collaborative platform established by KIPRA) to strengthen the capacities of CSOs in Papua.

However, a rigorous assessment to identify the potential of local CSOs to act as intermediaries is essential. The criteria should include experience in project management, reporting capabilities, and strong networks with smaller CSOs and grassroots organisations.

3.5.3 Leadership and Regeneration in CSOs

CSOs in Papua face significant challenges regarding leadership succession. Many organisations continue to be dominated by long-standing leaders, with some directors having held their positions for over two decades, as evidenced by groups, such as KIPRA, FOKER, and Yayasan Harapan Ibu. In contrast, the CSO landscape in West Papua

⁸⁴ Interview with informants C-P- 01, C-P-04, C-P-06, I-02 and I-04

⁸⁵ Based on researchers' interactions and experiences working with CSOs in Papua as well as national CSOs.

appears more dynamic, with the emergence of new organisations led by younger activists.

In Papua, the slow pace of leadership transitions is often attributed to personal preferences of leaders to remain in their roles and a lack of precise internal mechanisms to encourage leadership change.⁸⁶ As one informant explained,

I think it comes back to personal preferences and the internal mechanisms of the organisation. Some leaders hesitate to step down because they worry about what comes next after their tenure, so they feel comfortable staying in their position.⁸⁷

This reluctance is compounded by the absence of explicit internal policies regulating leadership terms. As noted,

Internal mechanisms should be clear and firm. For instance, a leader's term should be limited to a set number of years to proceed with succession planning.⁸⁸

While some efforts have been made to recruit younger staff, the lack of career growth opportunities often drives them to leave the organisation. Younger generations frequently feel that long-standing leaders' approaches and working styles do not align with their needs. One informant observed,

The current generation cannot be forced to follow the same methods we used back then, there are some gaps in their understanding.

This highlights the urgent need to adopt new approaches to build the capacity of young activists in Papua's CSOs.

Additionally, work culture can also hamper leadership succession, as some senior leaders are comfortable with traditional working methods and find it difficult to adapt to new approaches. One informant stated,

We want to find new ways of addressing old problems, so organisations in Papua need to be ready to keep learning.

Encouraging a culture of continuous learning and innovation is essential for creating a more inclusive and adaptive environment for younger generations.

Intermediaries and donors are often aware of this leadership gap, but efforts to address this issue remain limited. Donors tend to engage primarily with senior individuals, as they are more comfortable working with well-established figures who have experience and credibility. This approach, however, leaves younger generations feeling excluded from access to funding opportunities.⁸⁹

Furthermore, many young people often organise themselves through unregistered movements, which makes it even more challenging for them to access formal support or resources. Structural and bureaucratic barriers hinder youth-led initiatives, as traditional funding mechanisms usually require formal organisational structures. Many youth movements lack these structures due to their informal and grassroots nature,

⁸⁶ Interview with informants I-02, C-P- 01, C-P- 03, and C-P-05

⁸⁷ Interview with informant C-P-01

⁸⁸ Interview with informant C-P-01 and C-P-07

⁸⁹ Interview with informants I-01, I-02, and C-P-01-

creating a vicious cycle in which the absence of resources limits them from formalising, and the lack of formalisation prevents them from accessing the funding resources.⁹⁰

In addition to the generational divides, more subtle tensions also exist between male and female activists.⁹¹ These are most evident during conversations and discussions, where male figures often dominate the dialogue, leaving female activists or groups relatively silent. Furthermore, sexist jokes, frequently made by male activists, create discomfort among their female counterparts.

At a deeper level, male perspectives tend to shape agendas and programmes design, leading to a lack of gender sensitivity. Gender issues in Papua are often prioritised only when aligned with donor agendas. There have also been cases where female leaders were not elected due to rejection from male-dominated boards.

The involvement of women in CSOs is further hindered by family or husband restrictions. Many women face disapproval from their families or husbands, mainly when their work in CSOs requires traveling to the field or attending meetings in hotels. One female NGO director shared that her organisation has protocols in place to ensure female staff are escorted home after evening activities, noting that "otherwise, they would return with bruises on their faces the next day."⁹²

Despite these challenges, some female activists have begun to speak out in forums, openly expressing their discomfort with sexist jokes, and advocating for greater inclusivity.

3.5.4 Sustainability and Organisation Capacity

This study shows that local CSOs, particularly those from established NGOs, can organise and engage with communities. Many CSOs have built close relationships with rural indigenous communities by living among them and maintaining a long-term presence, which helps to foster trust and mutual understanding. This connection enables them to apply participatory approaches, allowing communities actively participate in development projects.

But throughout all these processes, these CSOs remain consistent in our work to strengthen efforts within the community. At the very least, they maintain communication with indigenous communities. Consistently, they continue to support the groups they are assisting. Their situation is unique—donor funding stopped, not because they were incapable. They continued working outside the organisation as volunteers in other areas. At the same time, they supported the organisation to ensure it could keep running.⁹³

CSOs have also demonstrated their ability to collaborate with local governments. They understand government policy timelines and budgeting processes, allowing them to

⁹⁰ Based on FGD with youth-led CSOs

⁹¹ Interview with C-P-06 and C-P-07, as well as observations made by the researcher during workshops and meetings in Papua, provide additional insights.

⁹² Interview with C-P-06

⁹³ Interview with informant C-P-04

align their advocacy efforts strategically.⁹⁴ Some CSOs have even established coalitions to unite different groups in tackling complex problems. For instance, the *Kitorang Sayang Merauke* forum in Merauke illustrates how CSOs can collaborate with government agencies, local communities, and private sector actors.⁹⁵

In addition, many CSOs have gained technical competencies, such as the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to support their work in areas like environmental conservation and land mapping.⁹⁶ GIS capacity has improved due to donor investment in GIS training, increased technical capacity, and deliberate efforts by CSOs to assign resources to staffs with GIS expertise.

Despite these strengths, CSOs face several challenges. A key issue raised by CSO leaders is the generational gap within their organisations. Older, experienced members possess valuable skills in grassroots organising, but younger staff often lack these skills and are less willing to work in rural areas.⁹⁷ This reluctance threatens the core strength of CSOs, which lies in their connection to grassroots communities. Developing the capacity of younger members is therefore critical, but it requires sustained funding and support, which are increasingly difficult to secure.

Funding for long-term capacity building, especially community organizing, has decreased significantly. Previously, donors, particularly from the Netherlands, such as Hivos (prior to becoming Humanis), invested in multi-year programmes aimed at training CSO leaders and strengthening organisational foundations. These programmes helped to build a solid foundation for CSOs, producing many skilled leaders who remain active today.⁹⁸

Most current donors focus on short-term results and measurable outcomes, often requiring deliverables within a year. This results-based approach limits CSOs' ability to invest in long-term development. The lack of multi-year funding makes it difficult for CSOs to sustain their work, especially in areas where long-term engagement is essential. A CSO leader explained,

Younger staff aren't interested in staying in rural areas to organise communities. Without funding to develop organizing skills, it's hard to train the next generation of leaders.⁹⁹

Another challenge issue raised by informants is the lack of space for local CSOs to contribute their ideas and be meaningfully involved in project development. Many intermediaries (and donors) often come with pre-designed agendas and treat local CSOs merely as implementing agencies. Informants argue that this practice weakens local CSOs by sidelining their perspectives and reducing their role to mere executors, rather than as equal partners in programme design and decision-making.¹⁰⁰

This exclusion undermines the unique strengths of local CSOs, such as their deep understanding of community needs, cultural nuances, and on-the-ground realities.

⁹⁴ Interview with informant C-P-05

⁹⁵ Interview with informant C-P-06

⁹⁶ Interview with informants I-04 and C-P-05

⁹⁷ Interview with informants C-P-04, C-P-05, C-P-06

⁹⁸ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-02, and C-P-04

⁹⁹ Interview with informant C-P-04

¹⁰⁰ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-02, C-P-03 and C-P-07

Without the opportunity to contribute to project ideas and proposals, local CSOs cannot fully leverage their knowledge and expertise.

Informants also highlight that this top-down approach affects sustainability of interventions, as projects designed without local input are less likely to address root causes or gain community buy-in. They emphasise the need for donors and intermediaries to foster more collaborative partnerships that value the contributions of local CSOs, ensuring that they play an active role in shaping programme objectives and strategies.¹⁰¹

Nonetheless, there are still examples of donors that demonstrate flexibility and support. Foundations, such as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and OSF are known for their commitment to strengthening organisational and human capacity.¹⁰²

For instance, the Packard Foundation's grant-making approach has allowed CSOs in Eastern Indonesia to have room to build their organisational capacity while feeling valued and respected. Similarly, OSF's initiatives provide funding tailored to the specific needs of organisations.

Nowadays, I think Packard and CLUA are perhaps good examples. They are more flexible with us. For instance, Packard gives us funding based on an idea, and then they request the data we provide. After that, it is up to us to use the funds for the organisation's needs.¹⁰³

3.5.5 Support for Coalition Building

Another issue that consistently arises in interviews about CSOs in Papua is the significant challenge of building coalitions and achieving effective consolidation.¹⁰⁴ Informants frequently emphasised the issue of fragmentation among CSOs, citing weak solidarity and unresolved historical tensions as persistent barriers. One informant explained,

The mentality has not changed much. There is still a lingering history of mistrust between CSO activities, which keeps us from fully coming together.

Personal conflicts compound these challenges, often spilling over into organisational dynamics. An informant remarked,

Sometimes, it is not about the work; it is about who is involved. If certain individuals are part of an initiative, others might pull out because of past disputes.¹⁰⁵

This tension also extends to generational divides. Younger activists frequently feel marginalised by older leaders, prompting them to leave and form new organisations. Conversely, senior activists sometimes establish new organisations when they feel

¹⁰¹ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-02, C-P-03 and C-P-07

¹⁰² Interview with informants C-P-04, C-P-07 and D-01

¹⁰³ Interview with C-P-04

¹⁰⁴ Interview with all local CSOs informants

¹⁰⁵ Interview with informant C-P-01

incompatible with existing dynamics, leading to further splits. These divisions often result in unhealthy competition over funding.¹⁰⁶

Practical challenges, such as competing priorities and limited time, also make collaboration difficult. Many CSOs are already overwhelmed, managing multiple projects and trying to meet donor requirements, leaving little time or energy for building coalitions or join efforts. This often leads to organisations working in silos, instead of joining forces and sharing resources. Securing funding adds to the problem, as CSOs focus on organisational survival over collective efforts.¹⁰⁷

Multiple informants highlighted the role of donors in perpetuating this fragmentation. Donors often direct funding to specific individuals rather than institutions, exacerbating inequalities. One informant illustrated this dynamic,

Donors come to you because you have three projects worth billions, while others barely scrape together a few hundred million. It is only human to feel some jealousy [to other CSO activists] in such situations.¹⁰⁸

This practice undermines the spirit of collaboration and creates significant resource disparities among organisations, further marginalising smaller, local CSOs.

Historically, the Forum for NGO Cooperation (FOKER) was a trusted platform that bringing together diverse organisations and individuals to collaborate on shared goals. However, a fraud case within FOKER led to a severe breach of trust, leading to its dissolution. Its absence has left a significant gap in this landscape, with no other platform stepping in to unify CSOs effectively—especially on sensitive issues, such as social and political conflicts. Despite the potential of individual activists and organisations, all local CSO informants find it challenging to identify which organisations can take on a coalition leadership role.

In response to these challenges, donor organisations and intermediaries have begun exploring coalition-building strategies to strengthen CSOs. Initiatives such as mapping customary land or other technical projects have been introduced to foster collaboration.¹⁰⁹ However, these efforts often remain limited to project-based frameworks and fail to evolve into sustainable, long-term coalitions. As one intermediary noted,

These coalitions tend to remain project-based and do not evolve into something more meaningful or sustainable. The infrastructure for real collaboration just is not there yet.¹¹⁰

Organisations, such as Samdhana, have attempted to address this gap by supporting FOKER's revitalisation and facilitating coalition-building efforts. While these initiatives hold promise, their effectiveness remains uncertain. "It's a work in progress," admitted another informant. "There is potential, but it requires long-term commitment; it is a huge challenge."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Interview with informants C-P-01, C-P-03, C-P-04, and I-02

¹⁰⁷ Interview with informants I-01 and I-02

¹⁰⁸ Interview with informant C-P-03

¹⁰⁹ Interview with informants I-02 and I-04

¹¹⁰ Interview with informant D-01

¹¹¹ Interview with informant I-09 and confirmed by informant I-01

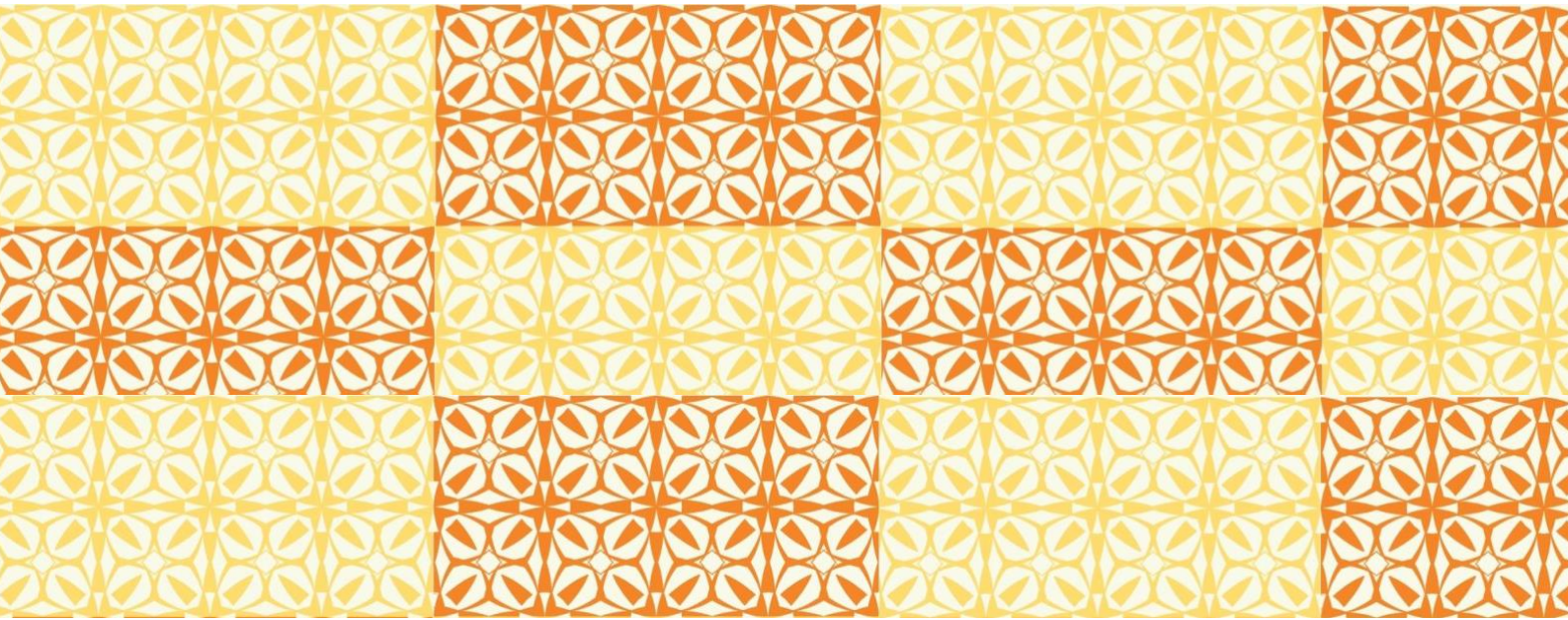
There is significant potential among CSO workers and activists to serve as facilitators in building coalitions. However, it is important to recognise that coalitions do not have to be limited to a single unified group. Instead, they can be formed around specific hubs or regions, such as provinces adat areas, or focused on particular themes, issues, or even group circles. This diversity in coalition-building promotes more feasible, targeted, and practical approaches.

Key facilitators that can be trusted by CSOs include Naomi Marasian, Elvira Rumkabu, Viktor Mumbor, Septer Manufandu, Andi Saragih, and Latifah Anum Siregar, all of whom have made valuable contributions to these efforts.¹¹² Some religious figures (*fraters*) can also be considered trusted and neutral facilitators, being highly respected in Papua. However, it is equally important to identify other potential facilitators who may have been overlooked in the study by consulting with local CSOs in specific areas.

¹¹² Interview with Informant D-5, I-02, I-04, C-P-05, C-P-07

Chapter 4

Conclusion and Recommendation



IN THIS CHAPTER

- 4.1 Challenges, Resilience, and Emerging Trends of Civic Space in Eastern Indonesia
- 4.2 Identified Support Gaps in Eastern Indonesia
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 - 4.3.1 Redefining the Roles of Donors and Intermediaries
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4.1. Challenges, Resilience, and Emerging Trends of Civic Space in Eastern Indonesia

The civic space in Eastern Indonesia, which includes Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua, is complex and evolving, shaped by unique challenges and opportunities. Unlike broader trends in Southeast Asia, where civic space is often shrinking due to authoritarian governance, these regions show a more varied pattern of constraint and adaptation.

A history of repression, conflict, and surveillance in Papua has created significant barriers for civil society, particularly for groups focused on democracy and human rights. While organisations working on environmental and service-related issues operate with slightly some freedom, the state's security-focused policies have created an atmosphere of fear and limited activism. Papua also receives considerable funding due to its rich natural resources, often resulting in unequal power dynamics whereby local organisations are sidelined by larger intermediaries.

The challenges in Maluku and North Maluku are different. These regions received little attention from the central government, along with limited funding and support. CSOs in these areas rely heavily on smaller grants and partnerships with local governments, restricting their ability to grow and tackle broader issues. Compared to Papua, these regions have fewer resources and less capacity to support CSOs.

Despite these differences, both regions share common challenges. **Geographic isolation and poor infrastructure hamper efforts to establish and support local CSOs, particularly those working in remote areas or grassroots communities.** Funding disparities and limited capacity-building opportunities further weaken grassroots movements. Donor requirements are often rigid and insensitive to local contexts, compounding the difficulties faced by local CSOs in building sustainable organisations and long-term initiatives.

Corporate activities pose additional threats to civic space across both regions. Industries, such as mining and palm oil exploit weak governance structures and fragment local communities, making it harder for CSOs to operate effectively. Activists face risks, including intimidation and violence, compounded by the lack of legal aid or emergency support mechanisms.

Despite these challenges, CSOs in Eastern Indonesia continue to show remarkable resilience. They have developed strategies to sustain their work under challenging conditions. **Youth-led movements are essential, particularly in environmental conservation and cultural advocacy.** In Papua, some of these movements address politically sensitive issues, leveraging digital tools and media to amplify their voices and navigate systemic barriers. In Maluku and North Maluku, youth-led movements are vital in promoting environmental protection and youth empowerment.

4.2. Identified Support Gaps in Eastern Indonesia

The study highlights critical support gaps affecting civil society organisations (CSOs) in Eastern Indonesia, specifically Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua.

First and foremost, funding and sustainability remain pressing concerns. A significant support gap exists within the funding structures for CSOs, directly affecting their sustainability and capacity-building efforts. In Maluku and North Maluku, limited funding—largely dependent on local government support and small donor grants—restricts the scale of programmes and hampers efforts to establish sustainable leadership regeneration. In Papua, while larger funding pools are available, access remains inequitable, favoring intermediaries over local CSOs. Bureaucratic and administrative burdens dominate the funding process, diverting attention from grassroots empowerment and substantive engagement.

The second aspect concerns the donor-intermediary-local CSO relationship. A significant support gap exists in the equitable structuring of relationships between donors, intermediaries, and local CSOs, particularly in Papua. While intermediaries play a vital role in facilitating access to funding, local CSOs often feel excluded from decision-making processes and constrained by unequal power dynamics. CSOs perceive only a few donors, such as The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, as genuinely valuing their perspectives and contributions. These imbalances—manifesting in disparities such as unequal salaries and restricted opportunities for input—undermine the development of mutual trust and collaboration, ultimately stifling local organisations' long-term growth and capacity.

The third issue concerns sectoral preference in funding support. Funding support shows a clear preference toward conservation and climate-related issues in Maluku and Papua. This is due, in part, to security challenges associated with working on democracy and human rights, which resulting in a resource gap for these critical areas. In Papua, restrictive screening processes for foreign funding make it difficult for multilateral and bilateral donors to operate in these sectors. Philanthropic donors who attempt to address this gap often work remotely, which limits their impact on hinders the empowerment of local organisations prioritising human rights and democracy.

The fourth issue relates to coalition building. There is a support gap for fostering effective coalitions among CSOs. In Maluku, coalitions are more apparent, but lack sustained funding and mechanisms for long-term collaboration. In Papua, uneven access to funding exacerbates internal fragmentation and fosters favoritism, resulting in competition and conflict among CSOs. While donors and intermediaries recognise this challenge, current efforts to promote collaboration remain largely project-based, with no systemic support for building trust and enduring long-lasting coalitions.

The fifth issue concerns the development of administrative capacity. Limited administrative capacity, especially in Papua, highlights a critical gap in support. While some donors, such as David and Lucile Packard and a few intermediaries have adopted more flexible approaches and simplified administrative standards, most donors and intermediaries continue to struggle to contextualise or streamline administrative requirements. They often provide minimal process-based mentoring or investment in personnel development. This lack of tailored support hinders CSOs' ability to effectively manage resources and scale their operations, limiting their potential impact.

The sixth aspect is accessibility and outreach. Eastern Indonesia's geographical challenges—small islands in Maluku or North Maluku and remote, rugged terrains in Papua—create a persistent accessibility gap. Limited funding further exacerbates this challenge, as local CSOs cannot reach marginalised communities in these remote areas.

This lack of investment in organising and mentoring activities weakens the foundation of community empowerment and leaves large swaths of underserved populations.

Finally, protection and legal aid for activists remain urgent needs. The legal aid infrastructure must be strengthened to protect activists from the threats posed by state repression in Papua and corporate encroachment in Maluku. Without dedicated resources for legal support, activists remain vulnerable, severely limiting their ability to advocate effectively for democratic and human rights.

4.3. Recommendations for Strengthening Civic Space in Eastern Indonesia

Based on the study findings and identified support gaps, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen civic space in Eastern Indonesia. These recommendations focus on fostering equitable partnerships, improving administrative processes, addressing regional inequalities, and building long-term capacity and collaboration. The recommendations outlined below are all equally important.

4.3.1 Redefining the Roles of Donors and Intermediaries

A key challenge identified in the study is the power imbalance between donors, intermediaries, and local CSOs. Many local CSOs feel undervalued in these relationships, which undermines their capacity to engage meaningfully and limits their capacities. To address this, donors and intermediaries can take active steps to redefine their roles and create equitable partnerships that empower local CSOs.

First, local CSOs should be treated as equal partners in designing and implementing ideas, programmes, and activities. This involves creating spaces in which local organisations can be given space to be listened to during decision-making processes and influence strategic priorities.

Intermediaries, pivotal in connecting local CSOs to larger funding bodies, need more explicit role definitions. Their primary focus should be on building the capacities of local organisations to implement programmes and on fostering collaboration, rather than engaging in competitive behaviors that risk fragmenting the sector. **Donors can support this by establishing transparent guidelines and accountability mechanisms for intermediaries, ensuring their activities align with the needs and aspirations of local CSOs.**

Additionally, decentralising funding models by enabling capable potential local CSOs to serve as intermediaries can create more direct and equitable funding channels. Strengthening the capacity of CSOs as intermediaries for regranteeing and capacity building needs to be accompanied by robust efforts to enhance and equip potential CSOs to improve their capabilities. For regranteeing roles, this includes strengthening administrative systems with robust mentoring processes. Identifying suitable CSOs for

regranting roles can be done through consultations and discussions with various CSOs, donors, and intermediaries to gather valuable input.

For regranting, the identification criteria might include administrative capacity, networking (particularly with more broadly trusted organisations), and established organisations, since longevity often indicates reliability. For capacity building, the focus should be on grassroots networks and experience in critical areas, such as research, event management, advocacy, community organising, and mapping.

This approach requires multi-year investments to strengthen administrative and financial management capacities and foster connections between these potential intermediary hubs and smaller, community-based CSOs. Targeted programmes in regions, such as Maluku and Papua, can identify promising organisations and systematically support their development. **Collaborative funding efforts among multiple donors could further ensure the sustainability of these localised hubs.**

Organisations, such as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, facilitate workshops and reflective dialogues that can help address power dynamics and collaboration challenges. These initiatives can equip stakeholders with the tools to navigate complex relationships and foster a more inclusive and supportive civic space.

4.3.2 Balancing Short-and Long-Term Goals

While short-term projects often focus on immediate community needs, they rarely build the sustainable capacity required for long-term resilience. To address this, donors can integrate capacity-building initiatives with programmatic activities, placing equal emphasis on organisational development alongside project deliverables.

This dual approach requires investment in leadership training, governance structures, and resource mobilisation. For instance, donors can support recruitment initiatives to attract new talent and provide mentorship for leadership development within CSOs. Offering flexible, multi-year grants can further enhance long-term sustainability. These grants reduce administrative burdens and provide financial stability, enabling strategic planning and capacity-building.

Simplifying grant application and reporting processes is another key component of balancing short- and long-term goals. Donors can trial streamlined procedures through pilot projects, ensuring accountability while freeing up resources for core activities.

Leveraging local expertise is also essential to ensure that programmes are culturally relevant and contextually appropriate. In Papua and Maluku, for instance, engaging local consultants and advisors with deep regional knowledge can make interventions more effective. This approach also builds regional expertise and promotes collaboration between local stakeholders and external actors.

4.3.3 Enhancing Grant Mechanisms and Broader Resource Allocation

Grant mechanisms should be restructured to ensure resources reach underrepresented regions and issues. Funding should prioritise human rights and democracy, indigenous rights, women's leadership, basic services, and community organising strategies. Additionally, donors must extend their reach to remote regions in Maluku, North Maluku, and Papua, which are often excluded from funding opportunities and remain vulnerable to exploitation by large corporations.

Geographically, this also implies that the redistribution of resources and support to other cities across Papua, not only in Jayapura, is crucial. While Jayapura may continue to serve as a central hub due to its strong network and the significant number of CSOs based there—many of which run activities and programmes in other parts of Papua, such as South Papua—it is important to extend this support to other regions. Such redistribution would help address the diverse needs and challenges faced by local communities throughout the province. By broadening the focus to include areas beyond Jayapura, CSOs and activists can better address regional disparities, build more localised networks, and ensure that critical resources are available where they are most needed.

Donor regranteeing can serve as a model for training and assisting small CSOs in proposal development to reach wider groups. One example of best practice comes from Lembaga Alam Tropika Indonesia (LATIN), albeit not a CSO operating in East Indonesia. As an intermediary organisation acting as a regrantee, LATIN conducted financial and administrative workshops for CSOs applying to an open call for proposals. This approach not only builds capacity for the grant recipients, but also strengthens the broader CSOs landscape, allowing a wider pool of high-quality grant applications in the future.

Flexible funding models that accommodate the needs of unregistered CSOs are also crucial. Many grassroots and indigenous organisations in remote areas lack formal registration, making them ineligible for traditional grants. Donors can create mechanisms to provide resources to these organisations while offering mentorship for formalisation, if needed. The formalisation process should focus on building administrative and financial accountability capacities, rather than prioritising documentation alone. Alternatively, funding can be directed through local CSOs or networks that collaborate with unregistered groups, thereby ensuring accountability without creating additional barriers.

While it may not be easy for donors to fund unregistered NGOs, mechanisms can be developed to allow flexible funding models that accommodate unregistered CSOs while maintaining accountability. Donors can facilitate reflective discussions and consultations to ensure this is possible. One informant from a philanthropic institution mentioned that they provide funding to unregistered NGOs by contracting trusted individuals, who then develop programmes within the unregistered CSOs.¹¹³ However, Packard may organise a discussion to identify further best practices for supporting unregistered CSOs while ensuring accountability.

For indigenous communities, tailored funding and capacity-building initiatives can empower them to preserve their cultural heritage, advocate for their rights, and engage with broader networks. Funding initiatives in areas, such as indigenous forestry and sustainability projects can provide a safe yet impactful entry point for supporting these

¹¹³ Interview with informant D-01

communities. This is particularly critical in areas near mining corporations and oil palm plantations, where communities often face social and environmental pressures. Support in these regions should prioritise community organising and empowerment to build resilience against external influences that may exploit or divide them.

Efforts must focus on fostering unity within communities, ensuring they are equipped to advocate for their rights, protect their natural resources, and resist attempts by corporations to sow division for their own benefit. Collaborative capacity-building programmes, advocacy training, and platforms for shared dialogue can enable communities to address their challenges collectively and sustainably.

4.3.4 Strengthening Coalitions and Mitigating Internal Conflicts

Fragmentation among CSOs, particularly in Papua, presents significant challenges to collective action. In regions, such as Maluku, strengthening coalitions can be achieved by building robust networks of NGOs and youth organisations, promoting collaboration, and aligning shared objectives. However, in Papua, deeper divisions require more nuanced and sensitive approaches to avoid exacerbating existing tensions.

To address these challenges, donors and intermediaries must adopt conflict-sensitive strategies. It is vital to ensure that interventions do not unintentionally intensify existing conflicts. Effective initiatives can focus on identifying common goals, facilitating dialogue, and encouraging cooperation among local CSOs. **Engaging trusted intermediaries—respected by the majority, if not all, parties—can bridge divides and help build community trust.** Regional workshops, joint planning sessions, and other inclusive platforms can offer spaces for CSOs to collaborate, build consensus, and work collectively to address local issues in a unified manner.

Moreover, donors must exercise caution when funding coalitions or partnerships in conflict-prone areas. Poorly designed funding structures may inadvertently fuel competition or deepen divisions. **Instead of emphasising project-specific competition, resources should be allocated to promote long-term cooperation and collective efforts beyond the immediate project scope.**

One approach to further this is shifting to a bottom-up system. Donors can organise meetings in which grantees serve as key speakers, fostering a participatory model that allows for a better understanding of CSOs' perspectives. This redefines the role of funding, not merely as a source of support, but as a facilitative tool that shapes the direction of agendas. **Donors can create a more collaborative environment by jointly formulating agendas with grantees and addressing issues like inequality from the outset.**

Furthermore, funding should be directed towards programmes that strengthen the local capacities of NGOs, with a focus on redistribution—ensuring resources are aligned more equitably across regions. This participatory model can also be a critical mechanism to monitor and mitigate the risks of exacerbating divisions due to poorly structured funding approaches.

4.3.5 Simplifying Administrative and Audit Requirements

Administrative and audit requirements often overwhelm the limited capacities of local CSOs, diverting valuable time and resources away from their core missions. To address this, donors and intermediaries can simplify reporting tools, procedures, and software to make these processes less burdensome while still ensuring transparency and accountability. **Streamlined systems tailored to the operational realities of local organisations can significantly improve efficiency without compromising oversight.**

Encouraging knowledge-sharing among donor and intermediary organisations that successfully simplified administrative processes can also be effective. **Peer learning opportunities, such as workshops or case studies, can highlight practical approaches for balancing accountability with efficiency.** These exchanges can inspire other organisations to adopt similar improvements and foster innovation in reporting and administrative practices.

Another critical area for improvement is the adoption of flexible funding models that adapt to changing local contexts. By reducing rigid reporting timelines and allowing CSOs to allocate resources based on emerging needs, donors can empower them to focus on achieving long-term impact.

Fraud prevention and mitigation efforts should emphasise education and capacity-building rather than punitive actions. Providing training in financial management, governance, and accountability practices helps address existing gaps while fostering trust between donors and local CSOs.

Addressing issues such as unwarranted interferences in financial matters and misuse of funds in Papua is challenging due to deeply rooted cultural norms, power dynamics, and limited access to governance education. Building understanding requires a mentoring-based approach that fosters trust and emphasises mutual learning rather than imposing external practices. Efforts must prioritise culturally sensitive strategies, such as working collaboratively and adapting governance concepts to align with local values, to ensure buy-in and reduce resistance. By framing good practices as tools to strengthen communities rather than restrict traditional customs, this approach can gradually introduce transparency and accountability without creating unnecessary conflict.

4.3.6 Adopting Conflict-Sensitive Approaches and Investing in Legal Aid Support

Conflict-sensitive programming is essential in high-risk areas, such as Papua to ensure the safety and inclusion of CSOs. Support for activists and human rights defenders in these regions is critical. **Resources, such as legal aid, safety training, and emergency support can help protect those working in volatile environments.** Programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of local actors to navigate conflict situations can also contribute to more effective and inclusive civic engagement.

To develop more detailed strategies for providing support in this sensitive area, donors can engage in dialogue and consultations with organisations experienced in security

issues—such as Amnesty International, ELSHAM, and OSF—as well as with local CSOs focused on democracy issues, including JUBI, IwaTali, and LBH Papua.

4.3.7 Investing in Youth Development

Youth-led initiatives are crucial for developing the next generation of civic leaders, and both regions demonstrate significant potential for emerging youth activism. Donors can create grant mechanisms tailored to youth organisations, focusing on creativity and innovation while minimising administrative burdens. To ensure that undesirable practices from senior activists are not passed on to emerging youth leaders, it is vital to embed strong ethical frameworks and accountability practices in youth programmes.

Intergenerational initiatives that connect young activists with experienced leaders can facilitate knowledge sharing and mentorship. These programmes should emphasise key areas such as governance, community organising, and advocacy training, ensuring that youth are equipped with practical leadership tools while maintaining high standards of integrity.

Moreover, providing safe spaces for open discussions on governance challenges and unproductive practices can promote transparency and prevent the transmission of negative patterns. By incorporating these elements, youth leaders will gain valuable insights while developing new ways of thinking, enabling them to build their own, more sustainable and responsible leadership styles.

Redefining the roles of donors, intermediaries, and local CSOs, increasing outreach, and redistributing resources to unregistered organisations and other sectors will also support the younger generation and staff in staying engaged and fostering growth. This approach promotes a more equitable environment, builds trust, and strengthens governance at a deeper level. In the long run, it can enhance professionalism within the sector while minimising the risk of escalating conflict.

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Annex

1. List of informants

Type of informant	Institution	Code
Donor	Open Society Foundation	D-01
	Undisclosed	D-2
	Undisclosed	D-3
	USAID	D-4
	Faith-based donor	D-5
Intermediary	World Resource Institute	I-01
	The Asia Foundation	I-02
	Burung Indonesia	I-03
	ex-The Asia Foundation	I-04
	Kurawal Foundation	I-05
	Penabulu Foundation	I-06
	Yappika	I-07
	Yayasan BaKTI	I-08
	The Samdhana Institute	I-09
	We Speak Up	I-10
	Extinction Rebellion	I-11
Implementing/ grassroots CSO	Jerat Papua	C-P-01
	FOKER Papua	C-P-02
	Bicara Foundation	C-P-03
	PtPPMA	C-P-04
Implementing/ grassroots CSO (continued)	PERDU	C-P-05
	Yayasan Wasur Lestari	C-P-06
	Papua Democratic Institute/Koalisi Kampus	C-P-07
	Perpustakaan Keliling Agape	C-P-08
	Papuan Voice	C-P-09
	Suara Akar Papua	C-P-10
	Koalisi Kampus Muda	C-P-11
	Perempuan Adat Papua	C-P-12
	Undisclosed	C-P-13
	Humanum	C-M-01
	LPPM	C-M-02
	Jaringan Baileo	C-M-03
	Kewang Muda Maluku	C-M-04
	Moluccas Coastal Care	C-M-05
	Rumah Generasi	C-M-06
	The Mulung	C-M-07
	Tunas Bahari Maluku	C-M-08
	FOSPAR	C-M-09
	FAMM	C-M-10

2. Interview guidelines

Assessment of Civil Society in Eastern Indonesia

Interview Guidelines

This is a guide for a semi-structured interview. Key informant interviews are an important source of information for the study as primary data that provides insights and depth to desk reviews. Before the interview, consult the interview protocol provided below. It is adaptable to the specific context of the interviewee, but it is important to maintain the key themes outlined to maintain data comparability. Keep in mind that natural conversation flows mean that you should not necessarily insist that each question be answered in order. It is important to maintain a conversational rhythm while remaining in control of the dialogue in case an interviewee veers too far from the question or gives an overly long answer. Ideally, you have already profiled the interviewee.

Reminder:

Open questions are those that leave the interviewee free to answer in any way they like. The advantage of open questions is that they provide broad information on a subject that is perhaps not yet clear. The disadvantage is that you may lose time during the interview, may receive irrelevant information and may not be able to compare the data collected with other more structured data. Open questions are a useful format for scoping interviews.

Closed questions impose boundaries on the interviewee's response, often in the form of yes or no. The idea is that the number of responses will fall within a limited range, similar to the structured questions of a questionnaire.

Semi-structured questions fall between open and closed interview questions and are likely to represent the majority of your key informant interview questions. These questions allow an interviewee to respond with some degree of flexibility while remaining pertinent to a specific issue raised by the interviewer.

Avoid leading questions: It is important that throughout the interview, you maintain objectivity and avoid imparting bias or unduly influencing your interviewee. Such bias threatens the validity of the entire interview. By refraining from expressing positive or negative evaluations of responses to questions, you are more able to collect objective data.

Keep control of the interview: Typically, in-person interviews and online interviews last around 60–90 minutes. Make sure to steer the conversation with an eye to gathering data on the key points in the interview checklist, and budgeting time efficiently. If your interviewee begins telling a long anecdote, you should politely and subtly interject to regain control of the conversational flow in line with your research questions.

End the interview by thanking them for their time. Ask if they have any questions.

Notes: Take notes during your interview and, if possible, record the interview with the interviewee's permission so that you may consult the entire conversation at a later point. Recorded interviews should be transcribed.

For stakeholders whom you are not able to interview, you may transmit a written version of the questions allowing them space to provide written answers.

Interview Protocols

The following protocols are modifiable to suit the information required while conducting the assessment. Keep in mind to provide the interviewer with information related to the privacy of the information shared, the use of information, as well as the objectives of the study.

In general, there are several types of interview prompts to structure the conversation:

Introductory Protocols

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. This research aims to shed light on the range of CSOs operating in Eastern Indonesia, their contextual influences, and how these factors impact their strategic choices and the achievement of their objectives. The research project attempts to answer the following questions:

Transition questions: These are questions relatively easy to answer and allow you and your interviewee to settle into the interview dynamic.

Key questions for research purposes: These are included in the protocol forms.

Closing remarks: Ask if there is anything they would like to add

3. Interview Questions

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
Donor groups	To gather information on how funding shapes civil society to operate and come together to assert their interests and exercise their human rights and freedoms in Eastern Indonesia:	- Donors' view on civic space conditions: - How would you describe the overall civic space condition in Indonesia? - In your opinion, how does the civic space condition in Eastern Indonesia differ from the rest of the country? - What are the key challenges and opportunities for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Eastern Indonesia compared to other regions? - Government control and support: - Can you share your experiences on how central government policies and actions impact your efforts to support CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? - How do provincial and district government controls and support affect your initiatives in Eastern Indonesia? - What specific governmental obstacles have you encountered when working with CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? - Strategies to address government limitations: - What strategies have you implemented to overcome the limitations imposed by central and provincial/district governments? - Can you provide examples of successful approaches to foster government support for enabling CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? - How do you navigate bureaucratic challenges and regulatory constraints when supporting CSOs in this region? - Funding initiatives and support: - How do your funding initiatives help civil society in Eastern Indonesia to be strong and effective?

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
		• What measures do you take to ensure that CSOs can operate safely and thrive in Eastern Indonesia? • How do you address the specific needs of unregistered or informal CSOs, as well as women and indigenous groups in this region? 5. Dynamic relationships and collaboration: • How would you describe the relationships between donors, the state, and CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? • In your view, how do these relationships shape the operations and collective strength of CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? • What is your assessment of the capacities of intermediaries and their collaboration with grassroots organisations in this region? • Can you provide examples of successful collaborations between intermediaries and grassroots organisations that have strengthened civil society? 6. Recommendations: • Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you offer to strengthen civic space in Eastern Indonesia? • How can donors better align their strategies with the needs of local partners and grassroots communities in Eastern Indonesia?
Intermediaries CSO groups	To gain insights into their services and relationships with CSOs, and how these enable civil society in Eastern Indonesia to operate and come together to assert their interests.	1. Intermediaries' views on civic space conditions: • How would you describe the overall civic space condition in Indonesia? • In your opinion, how does the civic space condition in Eastern Indonesia differ from other regions? • What are the unique challenges and opportunities for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Eastern Indonesia compared to other regions? 2. Government control and support:

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
		● Can you share your experiences on how central government policies and actions impact your ability to support CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? ● How do provincial and district government controls affect your services in Eastern Indonesia? ● What specific governmental obstacles have you encountered when working with CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? 3. Service support for civil society: ● How do your services help civil society in Eastern Indonesia to be strong and effective while operating safely and thriving? ● To what extent do you support unregistered (informal) CSOs, rural-based CSOs, and women/indigenous/youth organisations in Eastern Indonesia? ● Can you provide examples of successful initiatives that have strengthened CSO in Eastern Indonesia? 4. Relationships and power dynamics: ● How would you describe your relationships with CSO in Eastern Indonesia? ● How do power dynamics shape your interactions with CSOs, considering the complex relationships between intermediaries, the state, donors, and CSOs? ● What challenges do you face in maintaining equitable and supportive relationships with CSOs in Eastern Indonesia? 5. Compatibility of donor grant policies: ● How compatible or relevant are donor grant policies with the needs of local partners in Eastern Indonesia? ● What lessons have you learned regarding the mechanisms for reaching and supporting grassroots communities and unregistered CSOs? ● Can you provide examples of how donor policies have hindered your efforts to provide supports for Eastern Indonesia CSOs?

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
		- Can you provide examples of how donor policies have strengthened your efforts to provide support for Eastern Indonesia CSOs? 6. Recommendations to strengthen civic space: - Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you offer to strengthen civic space in Eastern Indonesia? - What specific actions should the state, donors, and intermediaries take to empower CSOs in Eastern Indonesia to be more effective? - How can intermediaries better align their services with the needs of local partners and grassroots communities in Eastern Indonesia?
Grassroots and implementing CSO	To gain insights into the realities of what is happening on the ground and to understand how these organisations can operate and come together to express their ideas and concerns	1. CSO's assessment and perspective of civic space conditions: - How would you describe the current civic space condition in Eastern Indonesia? - What are the main challenges and opportunities for CSOs operating in this region? 2. Empowerment and safety in expressing concerns: - How empowered do you feel to express your concerns, interests, or engage in collective action? - How safe do you feel to express your concerns, concerns, interests, or engage in collective action? - What significant factors influence your ability to freely express your interests? 3. Representation of grassroots communities: - To what extent does your organisation represent the needs of grassroots communities, including indigenous people, women, and youth, as well as CSOs in rural areas? - What significant factors influence the representation of your organisation to the needs of grassroots communities, including indigenous people, women, and youth, as well as CSOs in rural areas?

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
		• Can you share examples of initiatives that have successfully addressed the needs of these groups? 4. Impact of government policies and actions: • How do central government policies and actions affect your organisation's ability to operate and express its ideas? • How do provincial and district government policies and actions affect your organisation's ability to operate and express its ideas? • Can you provide specific examples of government actions that have hindered your efforts to operate and build collective action? • Can you provide specific examples of government actions that have facilitated your efforts to operate and build collective action? 5. CSO Strategies to address government limitations: • What strategies does your organisation employ to address government policies and actions that impact your work? • How do you navigate regulatory challenges and restrictions to continue achieving your goals? 6. Relationships with intermediaries and donors: • How do intermediaries and donors influence your organisation's activities? • In what ways do you ensure that your organisation's goals align with donor strategies to secure funding? 7. Collaboration with other CSOs based in the same area or peers: • How do you collaborate with other CSOs, including those in rural areas and unregistered CSOs? • Are there any conflicts or tensions in these collaborations, and if so, how do you manage them?

Group of informants	Objectives	Proposed Questions
		• What opportunities exist for building collective action or movements with other CSOs? 8. Recommendations: • What recommendations would you offer to the state, donors, and intermediaries to empower CSOs to be strong and effective in Eastern Indonesia? • How can stakeholders better support CSOs in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in the region?

4. Database of CSO in East Indonesia (all provinces in Maluku and Papua islands)

([Details in the linked document](#))

