

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

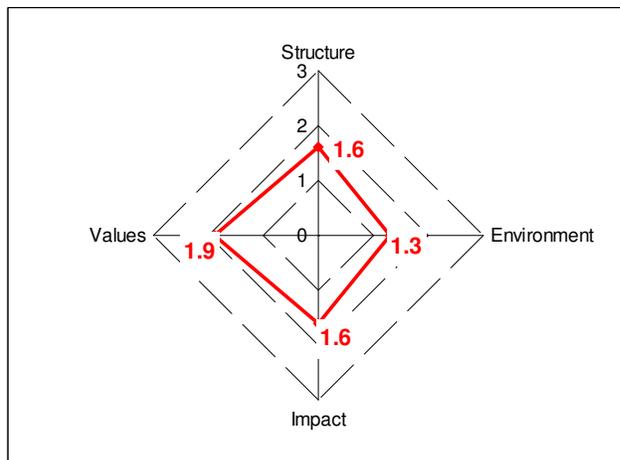
After eight years of reform, the road towards a strong civil society is (still) long.

This summary presents the key findings and underlines several important implications for the future agenda of the Civil Society Index (CSI) project in Indonesia, a project implemented by YAPPIKA, a civil society alliance for democracy.

For almost a year, from October 2005 to August 2006, information and input on the state of civil society in Indonesia was collected from civil society leaders, civil servants, members of regional parliaments, members of the public, experts and researchers for the compilation of the CSI. Data were collected from a variety of primary sources, including community surveys, regional stakeholders' surveys, media reviews, fact-finding and case studies, as well as from secondary sources. This information was then presented in the form of a comprehensive framework of 74 indicators.

The National Advisory Group, which consists of 16 civil society leaders and other key stakeholders, then discussed and analysed this information to give a score for each of the 74 indicators. This assessment can be visually presented in the form of the Civil Society Diamond tool, shown below.

FIGURE 1: Indonesia Civil Society Diamond, 2006



Indonesia's CSI, presented here for the first time, has given us new insight into Indonesian civil society, some of which challenges beliefs previously held by CSO leaders.

The diamond diagram shown here provides a visual representation of the current state of civil society in Indonesia. The diamond indicates that there is a comparable degree of weakness in three of the four dimensions – environment, structure, and impact, and that there is a long way to go before reaching the ideal (a score of 3). The score for the **values** dimension, which is close to two, suggests that Indonesian civil society has been reasonably successful in practicing and promoting the values to which it adheres.

Presented here is a summary of the key findings:

1. The Indonesian people are philanthropic and participate in organisations.

The Indonesian people can truly be counted among those who care for others, offering assistance in the form of money, goods and labour. Four out of five

Indonesians have contributed, monetary or in-kind, and have helped other members of society. These monetary contributions, however, do not add up to a significant amount because most Indonesians are not well off. More than half of Indonesia's people have at one time been members of a civil society organisation, and one in three has been a member of more than one such organisation.

2. Civil society's resources are extremely limited.

Most Indonesian CSOs are faced with the problem of having limited financial, human, technical and infrastructural resources. Most CSOs do not yet have adequate self-supporting and sustainable resources, and as a result are unable to achieve their stated goals effectively. CSOs also lack the ability to attract, form cadres of, and maintain the human resources they need for their organisations to function effectively. Membership fees have been unpaid by the members of membership-based organisations. Indonesian NGOs are dependent on foreign aid. Funds from the Indonesian public, financial assistance from government, and financial contributions from the private sector amount to only a small sum.

3. There exists an unfavourable external environment.

Although Indonesia's people enjoy political rights and other basic freedoms, many other factors are not conducive to the growth of a healthy and strong civil society. Indonesia is marked by weakness in rule of law. Trust of the legal system is still low in Indonesia, and many people do not believe that the courts are independent and free from political manipulation and bribery. Indonesia remains the most corrupt country in the world, and that has an effect on the culture and values of society. In addition, one in four Indonesians lives below the poverty line and several regions have suffered the violence of ethnic and religious conflict.

4. State-civil society relations: How best to promote dialogue and cooperation?

Although the era of reform has been in swing for the past eight years, state-civil society relations continue to be marked by mutual suspicion. The state is still perceived as an adversary by the civil society and many of civil society's tactics are confrontational and hardnosed. There is little in the way of genuine dialogue, or support and cooperation, between the state and civil society.

5. There are no tax incentives for CSOs as not-for-profit organisations.

The tax system in Indonesia does not make a clear demarcation between not-for-profit organisations and business entities. No tax exemptions exist for not-for-profit organisations working solely for the public good. In addition, there are no tax deductions for individuals or organisations that donate to social, religious or humanitarian activities.

6. Private sector indifference to CSOs persists.

Although some national conglomerates and multinationals do support or run community development programmes as part of their corporate social responsibility, the general feeling among CSOs is that the private sector is completely indifferent to CSOs. The feeling among advocacy NGOs is that private companies are not transparent and that they cause damage to the environment.

7. Intolerant groups use violence and discrimination.

Most of Indonesian civil society adheres to and actively promotes the values of democracy, tolerance, transparency, non-violence, gender equality, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, the results of community surveys show that within civil society there are certain groups that use violence, promote intolerance, and discriminate against women.

8. A lack of public trust in NGOs and labour unions persists.

Indonesian people have a high level of trust in religious social organisations. More than eighty percent of Indonesian people say that religious organisations (NU, Muhammadiyah, church organisations, and other religious organisations) are institutions worthy of a high level of trust. Trust in NGOs and labour unions, however, is low. Only 37% of Indonesian people trust NGOs and just 30% trust labour unions. This said, in Indonesia, NGOs and labour unions are still very much an urban phenomenon, with which the majority of the rural population has little experience. When asked how much they trust NGOs, thirty-five percent of Indonesians said they did not know, or they did not answer the question; forty percent either said they did not know how much they trusted labour unions or did not answer the question.

9. Civil society is not transparent and is not corruption-free.

The information that CSOs give the public about what they do and the resources they have – including the mechanisms for accessing this information – is still very limited. Very few Indonesian CSOs make financial information public. Such secrecy – intended or otherwise – is the “norm”. Information about sources of funds, budgets, wages, administration costs, and any information showing the relationship between the allocation of resources and the organisation’s mission is not generally available, even though information about budgets and sources of funds should be public, clear and easily accessible. Indonesian CSOs suffer from a deficit of information about financial transparency. Corruption is to be found in CSOs, although on a lesser scale and less widespread than in the government bureaucracy.

10. Indonesian CSOs have played an active and successful role in promoting democracy and human rights and empowering citizens.

Indonesian CSOs have played an active and successful role in influencing public policy in the areas of democracy building, protecting human rights and empowering citizens. By contrast, CSOs have been active, but have not been particularly successful, in influencing in the areas of public budget policy, making the private sector more accountable, creating jobs and meeting the needs of marginal groups.

These findings indicate that Indonesian civil society does have certain strengths: citizens are philanthropic and active members of organisations, there is good communication and cooperation among CSOs, citizens enjoy political freedoms and rights, civil society is relatively autonomous from the state and has been successful in promoting democracy and human rights and in empowering citizens. The challenges facing civil society, however, are considerable. This study found that CSO resources are very limited, and that

CSOs are very weak in the areas of accountability and transparency. Neither are they free from corruption. In addition, there is much room for improvement in relations between CSOs and the state and CSOs and the private sector, and there is a low level of public trust in NGOs and trade unions.

It is the opinion of the author that there is a close mutual relationship between each of the three weak dimensions – environment, structure, and impact. Indonesia's economic condition, which is exacerbated by a high rate of poverty, is reflected in civil society's lack of resources. This lack of resources is the reason that civil society is not always successful in fulfilling the needs of poor people and other marginal groups.

It is also interesting to comment on the values dimension, which was given the highest score by the NAG. This may give the impression that we as stakeholders tend to place a higher value on the values that civil society adheres to, practices and fights for. This is based on the idea of civil society as civilized society that works for the public good and therefore automatically adopts positive civic values. However, if "strong" civil society values are not values upheld by the society, including the government, civil society will have little space in which to influence societal structure. Civil society, particularly NGOs, have for a long time now been built up on foreign aid, to the extent that their values and goals are inappropriate to their domestic base, including the people and government. Therefore, it can perhaps be understood why civil society, especially NGOs, which are known as the pioneers of reform and democracy, are also frequently branded as tools of foreign propaganda. Due to differences in values, and the urban nature of NGOs and trade unions, Indonesian people in general are not familiar with these organisations and as a result, public trust in them is low.

Improving the dimensions of environment, structure, and impact, then, is key to the future growth of civil society. Attention needs to be given to how to generate domestic resources, from members, the public, government and the private sector, for example, to strengthen the resources and capacity of civil society. Efforts to eradicate corruption, improve law enforcement, and reform the state bureaucracy must be intensified to create a more effective state and a bureaucracy that properly performs its public service function. Public trust in civil society, in particular NGOs and trade unions, must be nurtured. This will happen if Indonesian civil society is better able to address the interests of marginal social groups, including labourers, and is able to make an effective contribution towards fulfilling citizens' basic needs. CSOs should also step up their monitoring of the behaviour of private companies to make them more accountable and transparent in their activities and to ensure that they perform their social responsibilities.

Although the past eight years are perceived as "the era of the rise of civil society in Indonesia", it seems that there is still a long way to go before we achieve the ideal. In addition, Indonesian CSOs need to work out a joint agenda and strategy to achieve that goal. Let us hope they can do that!