

## Research Articles

### Break the Limits: INGOs Limitation and Learning from Amnesty International

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#### Abstract

*Civil society as the beginning of the notions of INGOs gives a holistic view to analyze the problem and the limit of International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) itself. Critics that arises regarding the limit of INGOs is the lack of independence of INGOs that is questionable about the possibility of the dependence of funds even from individual actor to government fund. It can reduce the roles and the functions of INGOs to act objectively. Another critic for INGOs is a complex matter for international organizations in general about the lack of accountability. So many questions about how do INGOs can be more accountable or whom INGOs should be accountable. This paper argues that accountability should not just for the donors or the government but also stakeholder/grassroots. But, the limit of INGOs can be answered by Amnesty International which is a contradiction example of international organizations that is not affected by the limit of INGO.*

**Keywords:** International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Civil Society, Independent, Accountability

## I. Introduction

After the Westphalia Treaty until the Cold War, global concentration centered on the role and the behavior of the state. International organizations that emerged at that time still consisted of countries or what we called intergovernmental organizations. But after the Cold War, the state was considered to be no longer the only issue in international relations. One of the actors of the international relations that gives a big influence is international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). The rapid development of INGOs provides a breath of fresh air in the fight for justice, equality, and human rights. Starting from the concept of civil society and the emergence of social movements as the basis for the formation of more structured and organized NGOs. This paper will be developed from the root of the thought that the global civil society is the foundation of global interconnection that underlies the formation of INGOs. Then later INGOs had limitations in carrying out their roles and functions as a civil society organization. Then the question is, what limits INGOs? Do these limitations limit INGOs in general? Do these limitations apply to Amnesty International, which is a form of INGOs and large human rights organizations? Through the Amnesty International case study, the authors argue that issues that limit INGOs cannot be generalized to all organizations. Amnesty International is a concrete example of illustrating the contradictory form of INGOs limitations. The conceptual framework of this paper uses accountability to explain the phenomenon of problems in INGOs.

This paper begins with how civil society is the basis for its existence and association with INGOs. The emergence of these issues is accompanied by the emergence of civil society

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with their thoughts that respond to the issues that develop from various perspectives. At the core of globalization and an understanding of the global civil society in a larger process than a shift from "place" to "flows", networks are the middle concept (Katz and Enheier, 2006). INGOs networks provide facilities for interconnection between global civil society and global entities. According to Katz and Enheier (2006) global civil society has two important roles in global governance, first, being part of a check and balance system, supporting transparency and accountability of institutions of the global order, and secondly as being a representation of weaknesses and marginalization.

## **II. Networks, Global Civil Society, and INGOs**

The definition of the network itself is a set of links (links) or bonds that connect the node points (nodes) (Katz and Enheier, 2006). What is meant from the nodes here is the type of community or organization and links are the relations between vertices. Katz and Enheier (2006) add that global civil society is important in its relationship with networks. This is because the structure of networks has an impact on outcomes for the individuals and organizations involved as a whole. Then it was said that network connectivity in a solid infrastructure in the development of civil society was a hegemony of bloc, a block that could challenge the power structure. Hegel views civil society as "an advanced social formation between family, family, and state (Gray and Bebbington, 2006). Whereas Marx and Engels illustrate the difference between civil society and the state by looking at the understanding and structure of civil society as a pivot for various explanations of political agendas, legal change, and cultural development (Ambercombie et al, 1984 in Gray and Bebbington, 2006). With the global

civil society becoming an actor in the global governance system that can provide critical issues to INGOs.

Global civil society has emerged as a major social force in recent decades to counter attacks on life and democracy with institutions of corporate globalization (Vujadinovic, 2008). Edwards (2000 in Gray and Bebbington, 2006) describes civil society as an arena where people gather to advance their shared interests but not for profit or the interests of political forces but because they care about something to take collective action. Global civil society has 3 dimensions, namely (1) the empirical phenomenon of globalized and interconnected social relations; (2) mobilizing, the formative power of the project/vision; (3) social actors (movements) at the global/transnational level (Vujadinovic, 2008). Local existence is considered as an activist root that has potential and empowers local activists with international support. The emergence of a civil society organization is a shift in the function of what the state should represent civil society, but as its development, the state seems to move away from representation itself. As a new form of identity that civil society grows into an international civil society to become a global civil society which then eliminates the full identity of the state.

State power is no longer absolute but experiences division of power. What is meant by the division of power here is that the state shares power with other entities that have the same influence in international relations such as corporations, INGOs, to individual actors. INGOs also play an important role in translating international agreements and norms into domestic realities, when the government turns a blind eye (Simons, 1998). According to Chandhoke (2002), it is not surprising that global civil society is dominated by INGOs even though other actors such as political network activists who acquired

borders and anti-globalization movements play an important role and an indication of the strength of the non-government sector that civil society has been identified with INGOs activists. INGOs have a performance that refers to the main indicators of civil society participation growth in policy formulation both from national and international (Lage and Brant, tt). It is this dynamic which then makes a shift between the state, the private sector and civil society which provides challenges and opportunities for INGOs not only nationally but also internationally. In line with the principles of civil society, INGOs describe organizations that are not profit-oriented or of political interest and focus on the benefit of humans in general and broadly.

In general, INGOs are non-profit organizations and operate without government interference, but in some cases the government also funds INGOs. The use of the term NGOs is widely used so that overlapping whether INGOs are "non-profit", "voluntary", and "civil society" organizations (Lewis, 2009). INGOs are transnational, international private actors that cross national borders, are formed by individuals nor groups, and are not representatives of the national government. For decades, INGOs have become one of the important issues in international relations related to their actions and growth. At the international level, these organizations have been referred to as transnational social movement organizations that are characterized by several formal structures (Kriesberg, 1997, p. 12; Smith, 1997, p. 42 in Martens, 2002). The rapid growth of INGOs began to develop rapidly after the Second World War where humanitarian issues became concerns and issues in society.

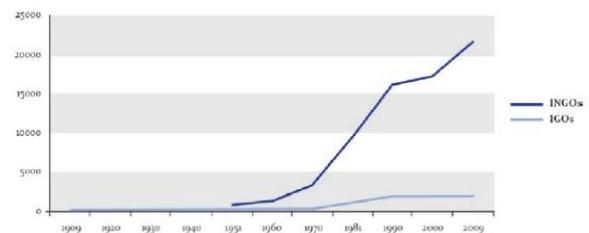


Figure 1: Number of INGOs and NGOs, 1909-2009 (Weiss et al, 2013)

### III. The Limit of INGOs: Accountability and Transparency

The independent strength of INGOs that is independent of the state is the existence of connectivity between agents that cross national borders. Global civil society becomes an important instrument that connects INGOs globally. As explained above, one of the systems in implementing INGOs is the existence of a voluntary system with the principles of civil society and back to civil society. Not only on recruitment but also funding systems that depend on donation systems from both the government and individuals. Therefore, one form of accountability of INGOs is through transparency not only in the outcome of the action but starts from the decision making process. This form of accountability is not only for donors or government agencies but also for stakeholders and the public. Accountability is not only a way for the organization to account for its actions but also provides a way for the organization to be responsible for the development of policies and procedures to shape mission and values and to assess performance until goals are achieved (Burall and Neligan, nd.). Accountability and transparency dimension is at the principle level, at least it is easiest to build broader political pressures such as public acceptance, that timely access to relevant information about organizational activities and policies is very important to guarantee stakeholders both internal and external makes it possible to hold organizations accountable effectively (Florini,

2003 in Burall and Neligan, nd.). In understanding the dynamics of accountability and limitations of INGOs, Bendell (in Szporlux, 2009) provides the following summary:

Corporations, governments, and intergovernmental bodies are much more powerful than NGOs and affect many more people. NGOs do not poison rivers, imprison activists, or declare war... NGOs do not price public services at a level to make a profit, for example, with the difficulties this often causes for those unable to pay. Neither do NGOs lobby for intergovernmental agreements that will help enhance their profits. As more public services are privatized and more corporations exercise influence at the intergovernmental level, so we should retain a critical focus on their accountability. (Bendell as cited in Szporlux, 2009)

But in practice INGOs, in general, are very difficult to realize real accountability. Lack of clarity about the object for which accountability is intended. In other words, INGOs often only present accountability, not to stakeholders but donors (both individuals, corporations, and countries). Gray and Bebbington (2006) suggest that INGOs go along a line connecting closeness with funding agencies, the state, and corporations (which later, they risk their independence, legitimacy, and trust from grassroots support) who struggle to survive and maintain their integrity in facing increased attacks from fixed interests they are challenged to:

[i]t is no accident that questions about legitimacy are being raised at a time when NGOs have started to gain real influence . . . They are victims of their success. Neither is there a

shortage of hypocrisy among the critics, especially when it appears that NGOs are being singled out in contrast to businesses (and even many governments) that are even less accountable than they are (Edwards, 2000, pp. 22-3).

This conception of accountability is related to the second characteristic of INGOs from David Lewis (2009), namely private. Lewis's explanation of the private character contrasts with the concept of accountability. A private character that emphasizes the standing position of INGOs that are separated through the state. With one of the facts that the country could be one of the many donors who gave donations to INGO. Thus, accountability is a critique of INGOs who question who accountability is aimed at. As the critics of Gray and Bebbington above criticize that INGOs often give transparency and accountability only to donors and not to stakeholders/grassroots. Financial problems in the body of an organization can be sensitive and more serious. If you look back at the initial idea, INGOs were formed through the common interests of civil society with the principle of not being profit-oriented and free from political influence through a more bottom-up system of accountability considered to be in contradiction with the notion of shared civil society's interests which should be more top-down.

#### **IV. Amnesty International: No Limit**

Amnesty International is one of the international organizations that respond to criticisms of accountability for INGOs. Contradictory that later Amnesty International was able to prove that they have clear and legally guaranteed accountability. It can be seen through the remedial site from Amnesty International that there are financial reports

that are periodically updated and can be accessed by the entire community.

The work carried out through AI's International Secretariat is organized into two legal entities, in compliance with United Kingdom law. These are Amnesty International Limited ("AIL") and Amnesty International Charity Limited ("AICL"). The audited financial statements cover the operation of the International Secretariat working through the two entities". (Amnesty International).

Amnesty International conclusively proves that INGOs can be more accountable. This organization which is engaged in human rights is the paradox of criticism regarding accountability. One of the interesting things from Amnesty International's statement above is that the system of transparency and financial accountability of the organization is under legal supervision and protection. Besides, Amnesty International has succeeded in providing a concrete example that INGOs can provide accountability not only to donors but also to grassroots. Despite receiving substantial financial assistance from individuals to countries, Amnesty International stressed that donors will not have room to interfere and intervene in the organization's internal policies. This is in line with David Lewis's fourth INGOs character, self-governing. In this characteristic, in the Amnesty International case example, there is a similarity with the second characteristic which is explained that Amnesty International fully controls the organization without intervention from any entity. This is confirmed again by the argument from Amnesty International which states:

"We are independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion. No government is beyond

scrutiny. No situation is beyond hope". Amnesty International. (Amnesty International).

Many things very often become criticisms of INGO are more basic than criticisms to whom accountability is aimed at. Efforts to get funding that depends on donations are considered to be less strategic and uncertain timeframes. Besides, Szporlux (2009) added that the dependence of government funds is considered to be able to limit the ability of INGOs to conduct objective oversight in overseeing state functions. Still in the funding system, the lack of transparency in the use of financial funds has led to speculation of misuse of organizational funds. Mark Moore and William Ryan categorize four general social concerns regarding non-profit performance, namely the transfer of assets for personal gain, wasting resources in organizational operations, the ineffectiveness of organizational methods in achieving desired social results, and imperfect justification in adjusting the mission for important social issues (Szporlux, 2009). In responding to the above criticisms, Amnesty International responded straightforwardly through accountability and transparency that could be legally accounted for and the rapidly developing global movement made Amnesty International with credibility. Efforts to increase credibility to answer the limitations of INGOs. That what is the limitation of INGOs does not apply to Amnesty International. Gray and Bebbington (2006) put forward data that states that Amnesty International is an international organization with accountability ranked second below the Red Cross and above The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

## V. Conclusion

The civil society that brings big ideas that are connected with globalization to bring about

the interconnection between people globally without state borders. People who are aware of their values, norms, and rights are considered to have an important role in the global order. Civil society has two important roles, namely as a check and balance in supporting the transparency and accountability of institutions, and as a representation of the symbols of weakness and marginality. Global civil society is connected with common problems and interests but free from profit-seeking and political influence. It can be said that civil society is connected with joint problems by taking collective action. As a new thing in international relations, civil society has become the root of the formation of global social movements that continue to evolve and evolve into independent organizations that separate themselves from the role of the state in managing organizations. In line with the definition of civil society, INGOs have the understanding as a transnational organization that concentrates on social and humanitarian issues, non-profit, and independent of government interference. The problem that arises then is the stigma that considers that the dependence on funds that depend on donations is considered as ineffective INGOs in carrying out its independent role. Then later, if one of the INGOs 'financial resources is government funds, it will eliminate INGOs' objectivity in conducting supervision on the state. The next criticism is the lack of accountability in INGOs. However, even though some are accountable INGOs. It often happens that accountable INGOs are not in the grassroots but the capital givers. This criticism later became an issue regarding the credibility of an organization. However, the protestants with the two criticisms above Amnesty International became a large human rights organization that succeeded in breaking the stigma of the limitations of INGOs. Amnesty

International is not limited by criticism of INGOs' independent role and accountability. Amnesty International succeeded in describing how they were able to independently manage the organization and finances without interfering and even intervening from the government that provided the funds. Accountability is considered only given to the giver of capital but can be transparent not only grassroots but also society in general. Not only is it publicly open, but Amnesty International's accountability is also legally guaranteed and can be accounted for.

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