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CONNECT, DEFEND, ACT!

INDONESIA BASELINE STUDY 2024

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BASELINE STUDY **2024** INDONESIA

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01 **Baseline Study Connect, Defend, Act! (CDA)**
Country : Indonesia

Brief Project Overview

All around the world, those in power, not only in autocratic governments but in established democracies as well, are increasingly imposing restrictions on civil society to freely express themselves, to protest against systemic injustices and to organize themselves to defend fundamental human rights. Digital tools and platforms carry the potential to create safe and brave spaces for trust-based collaboration and increased access to information, but they remain shaped by unequal access, as well as undermined by increasingly sophisticated digital surveillance and attacks by state and non-state actors.

With Support from NORAD, Hivos is implementing a project called ''Connect, Defend, Act!. '
To respond to the issue of shrinking civic space and amplify civil society-led action, the "Connect, Defend, Act!" (CDA) project will support Civil Society Actors in Colombia, Indonesia, Malawi and the occupied Palestinian territory in their efforts to defend and expand civic space through three strategic objectives:
1) By promoting coalition building among diverse Civil Society Actors, including Human Rights Defenders, Rights holder-led civil society organizations and independent media actors, grounded in civil society-led evidence gathering and knowledge production, and facilitated by context-specific Communities of Action.
2) By contributing to safe and inclusive digital civic spaces for sustained collaboration and action among Civil Society Actors through localized holistic digital security capacity strengthening, knowledge production and active referral to digital protection providers.
3) By increasing Civil Society Actors' flexibility to rapidly respond to changes in civic space through organizational capacity strengthening and the provision of strategic funding for sustainable action.
The project aims to strategically support relevant actors within civil society whose work actively contributes to civic space from the perspective of different sectors and interests, while particularly including groups who are marginalized within civil society, such as women, youth, LGBTIQ+ persons, Indigenous People and others.
With Support from NORAD, Hivos is implementing a project called 'Connect, Defend, Act!'. To respond to the

Specific problems per country

In all four countries, civic space is under considerable pressure according to the CIVICUS Monitor but not fully closed. This means that there are opportunities for Civil Society Actors to positively influence the openness of civic space by preventing further backsliding as well as harnessing windows of opportunities through joint action.

Indonesia was once praised for the achievements of the *Reformasi* period (starting in 1998), in which strong public demand channeled by student movements, Civil Society Actors played a key role in pushing for democratic rights and freedoms. This opened new avenues particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including women, LGBTIQ+ people, and religious minorities, to organize and voice their demands. However, Indonesian democracy has suffered a series of setbacks in recent years. The past five years in particular have witnessed increasing repression of freedom of expression, information and assembly, mass vigilantism, political polarization, populism, dysfunction of democratic institutions, and eroding check and balances. At this point, civic space is considered "obstructed" according to CIVICUS10 and Indonesia has further declined from stagnation to regression.

Democratic regression and shrinking civic space in Indonesia are hindering the efforts of civil

02.1 Specific problems per country

General Problems:

- Democracy is paralyzed by actors who are adept at utilizing democratic procedures to enter the circle of power
- This trend is evident in several global democracy indices
- Indonesia shows the same trend:
  1. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem): Indonesia as one of the largest democracies experiencing autocratization (2023).
  2. Freedom House (FH): Downgrading Indonesia from free to partly free (2014-2024).
  3. *Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU): Indonesia classified as a flawed democracy (2024).*

Specific Problems:

1. Autocratization through Democratic Processes
   - Unlike earlier waves of autocracy marked by military coups or personalist regimes, the current wave sees leaders using democratic procedures to erode democracy itself. Indonesia exemplifies this trend, with leaders consolidating power while maintaining a democratic facade, as reflected in declining civil liberties and freedom scores.

2. Declining Democratic Indicators
   - Major democracy indices highlight Indonesia's backsliding. V-Dem identifies Indonesia as an autocratizing democracy, Freedom House downgraded its status from "free" to "partly free," and EIU classifies it as a flawed democracy. Civil liberties in particular have suffered significant declines, which many Indonesians fail to recognize due to Indonesia's relative score above the global average.

3. **Shrinking Civic Space**

o   Civic space in Indonesia has diminished across multiple dimensions, including:
  - Rights to association, peaceful assembly, and expression.
  - Safety and protection for those voicing public interests.
  - Participation in public decision-making processes.
  - Digital freedom and maneuvering space for activism.
  - Living space for marginalized communities.

4. **Hidden and Overlapping Repressions**
  o   Repression in Indonesia is increasingly subtle and multifaceted, affecting private, digital, and public domains. It also operates under the guise of "majoritarian harmony," suppressing dissent and diversity through hidden transcripts of repression.

5. **Overwhelmed Civil Society Pillars**
  o   Key civil society actors face institutional and bureaucratic pressures:
  - Students are incentivized to prioritize personal advancement (e.g., scholarships, internships).
  - Academics are overburdened with publication and administrative demands.
  - NGOs struggle with complex registration and funding requirements.
  - Journalists grapple with the shift to digital media and digital security challenges.

6. **Disconnection and Fear in Resistance**
  o   There is a disconnection between resistance in physical and digital spaces. Despite pockets of dissent, fear of expressing opposing views persists, undermining collective efforts to counter autocratization effectively.

BASELINE STUDY METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

This 15-day baseline study adopts **two main data collection strategies.** The first is **desk research of more than 60 reports and academic publications, as well as 6 datasets**. **While centering those prepared by local individuals and organizations, we situate them within the larger trend at the global level.** The second is **key informant interviews of 20 individuals,** whose demographic disaggregated data are presented in below's annex.

Annex. Disaggregated data of Key Informant Interviews (KII).

Number of respondents according to gender (F/M/Nonbinary)	Number of respondents according to age (> or <40 years old)	Number of respondents according to localities (Java/Outside Java)
Female: 13 Male: 7 Non-binary: 0	Below 40: 14 Above 40: 6	Outside Java: 13 Java: 7
Total Respondents: 20		

In terms of organizing and analyzing our data, we make use of The Authoritarian Playbook and rely heavily on a number of frameworks from nonviolent resistance studies, namely Spectrum of Allies, Points of Intervention, and Pillars of Support. We believe said frameworks allow the data to be more readily actionable by CSAs, especially community organizers and human rights defenders. To avoid misrepresentation and assure the quality of this report, we sent out an earlier version of this report to all resource persons involved in the baseline study and two external reviewers, and revised the draft according to their inputs.

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We borrow Einstein's conception and propose the idea of "civic spacetime." In doing so, we pay attention not only on the contraction of maneuvering, digital, living, contestation, and private spaces, but also the diminution of the time to invest in and take care of those spaces. **The problem is then not as simple as CSAs losing the space they need to push back against autocratization, but also CSAs losing substantial time (and energy) to do so.**

The Boiling Frog Syndrome: Shrinking Civic Spacetime in Slow Motion

Amidst the ongoing third wave of autocratization, CSAs worldwide are facing outplay them in utilizing democratic measures to consolidate power. Given how subtly, gradually, and slowly democracy has been eroded in Indonesia, it is no wonder shrinking civic space has not been met by massive public concern and outcry. Also, the abundance of (former) NGO workers and academics with and for the government provides an illusion, or façade, that democracy is "*baik-baik saja*" (doing fine). **Any pushback against shrinking civic space needs to seriously pay attention not only on the contraction of maneuvering, living, digital, contestation, and private spaces, but also the diminution of the time to invest in and take care of those spaces.** The problem is not simply CSAs losing the space to push back against autocratization, but also CSAs losing substantial time (and energy) to do so.

The Matrix of Resistance: Rethinking Allies and Strategies

Thinly stretched and overwhelmed, CSAs in Indonesia need to broaden their "save civic spacetime" lineup. **They need to forge alliances beyond the usual suspects and prioritize including the most vulnerable and marginalized.** Also, they need to widen their targets to include points of production and consumption, seeing that existing interventions tend to focus on points of decisions and destruction. Here, CSAs need to enhance skills in brokering different groups, weaving intersectional solidarity, and in *unarmed civilian protection* (UCP).

Apocalypse Not: Innovate or Succumb

CSAs in Indonesia have relied on limited, predictable, low-intensity methods of nonviolent resistance and digital activism. **To disrupt the authoritarian agenda effectively, CSAs need to up their skills in imposing relevant dilemma actions to opponents, most likely by engaging in novel, high-intensity methods of resistance and activism that would catch opponents off guard.** More fundamentally, **CSAs need to switch from defense to offense mode.** Looking into the authoritarian playbook, it should be clear what the autocrats' next moves would be—as well as what CSAs need to do to outsmart and outlast those autocrats.

Baseline recommendations
Strategic recommendations by population

For CSAs

1. Weave Intersectional Solidarity
   - Continuously map and update the Spectrum of Allies across regions, sectors, and networks. Actively engage neutral actors and passive allies who may otherwise be swayed by autocrats. Early entrance, low bar, systematic outreach: start at schools/homes, don't be picky, go wild!
   - Actively lend privilege to individuals and groups facing specific risks and challenges given their intersecting identities (gender, ethnicity, class, etc.).
2. Anticipate Scenarios and Draw Red Lines
   - Develop pre-emptive strategies and simulations for potential future attacks on civic spacetime.
   - Collaboratively establish clear "red lines" against authoritarian strategies. Publicize these lines and prepare collective responses, such as widespread nonviolent resistance when these lines are crossed.
3. Strengthen Resistance Tactics
   - Refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) through stress-testing and simulations.
   - Broaden nonviolent resistance repertoire, including dilemma actions and diverse points of intervention.
   - Step up legal and political challenges against restrictive laws (i.e. ITE and Ormas) and document their negative impacts on human rights. Engage with the judiciary as the remaining viable constitutional avenue, beyond remedial approaches.
4. Revamp Civic Education and Public Awareness
   - Actively promote critical thinking, democratic values, and human rights, especially among youth.
   - Amplify information about democratic backsliding beyond activist circles.
   - Develop and disseminate counter-narratives, i.e. that frames social justice struggles as civic duty (instead of sheer insubordination) and act of love (instead of being unpatriotic).

For Donors

1. Step Up Financial and Technical Support for CSAs
   - Increase support for CSAs defending democracy and human rights, especially in the face of Indonesia's autocratic drift. Support flexible and rapid emergency funds as well as capacity-building initiatives, training, and resources for local trainers. Endorse stress-testing SOP and unarmed civilian protection schemes for vulnerable CSAs. Apply accountability procedures that are less bureaucratic and time-consuming.
   - Provide sufficient resources for localized and issue-based civic space monitoring.
   - Provide support for instilling critical thinking and human rights into civic education, as well as for developing pro-democracy counter-narratives.
2. Promote International Advocacy
   - Encourage CSAs to report the impacts of restrictive laws and rights-violations to international human rights platforms, raising awareness and seeking external pressure on Indonesia's government to uphold its international human rights commitments.

For the Indonesian Government

1. Protect Civic Spacetime and the Rule of Law
   - Revoke or revise laws and regulations passed by previous administrations that have led to the shrinking of civic spacetime in recent years, including UU ITE, UU Ormas, etc.
2. Protect activists and prosecute perpetrators
   - Assure the safety and well-being of activists and journalists. Attacks on CSAs and journalists should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.
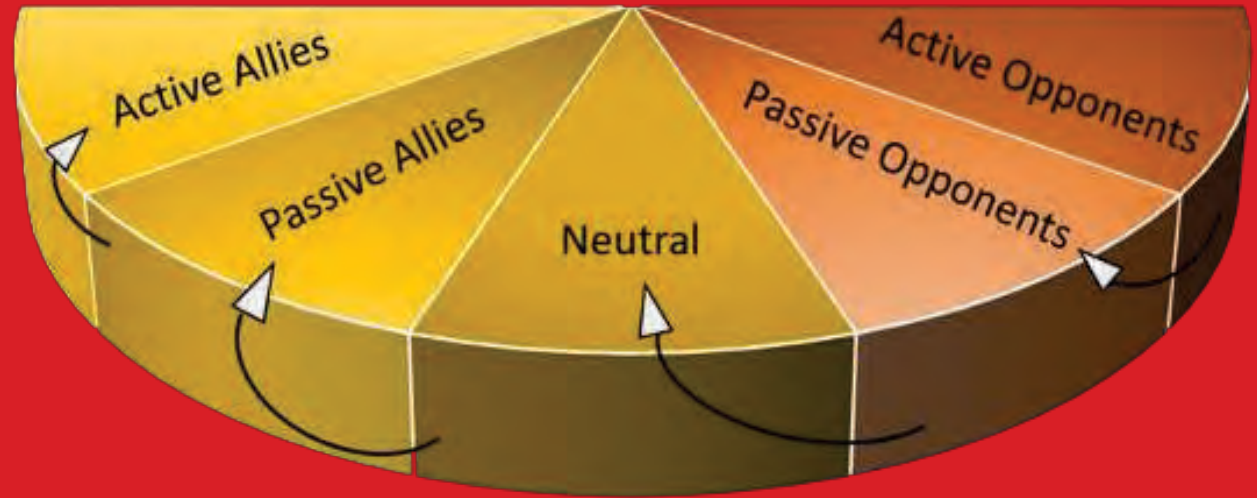3. Reform Civic Education

Revamp school and university curricula to foster a critical and informed citizenry rather than a passive workforce. Human rights and social justice need to be at the core of this curricula.

Defend – Points of Intervention

Act – Pillars of Support

MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
LOCAL BUREAUCRATS
COMMUNITY LEADERS
BUSINESS LEADERS
CITIZENS
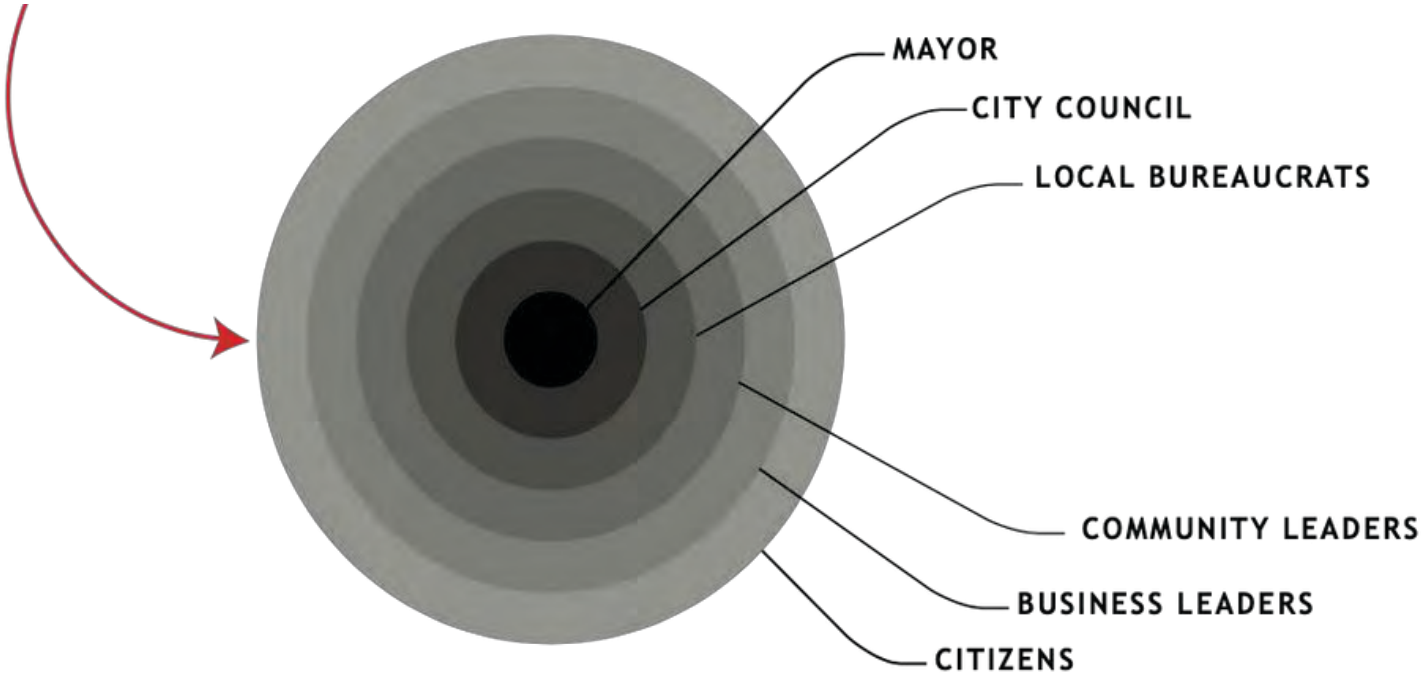
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