

International Support for Domestic Election Monitoring Organizations in Indonesia

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Abstract – *Democratic election is believed as one of the important keys to democratic development of a nation, and the election monitoring is recognized as one of the most effective means to assure that the election is implemented in a free and fair manner. Supporting domestic election monitoring organizations (DEMOS) become, thus, on the agenda for democracy assistance of the international aid community. In Indonesia, democracy assistance and DEMOs are relatively new phenomena in its political system. This study will analyze the role of democracy assistance in the form of supporting Indonesian local DEMOs in the democratization of Indonesia, by addressing three questions. First, what kind of democracy assistance has been distributed in the General Elections of 1999 and 2004, and how has the assistance affected the functions and characteristics of Indonesian local DEMOs? Second, how has democracy assistance improved the relationship between Indonesian local DEMOs as civic actors and state actors such as General Election Committee as official election supervisory body in formulating and realizing democratic election? Third, how have donor countries influenced the performance and sustainability of Indonesian local DEMOs? Overall, this study purposes to analyze how democracy assistance can have a positive role in supporting domestic actors at different levels to cooperate with each other, and to get themselves actively involved in the democratization of Indonesia. Copyright © 2016 Penerbit Akademia Baru - All rights reserved.*

Keywords: Election monitoring, democracy assistance, civil society, democratization

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Aid to civil society, including domestic election monitoring groups, has become a common trend of donor countries since the 1990s. Support for domestic election monitoring groups has a part of what we call democracy assistance. Democracy assistance is aid programs specifically designed either to help non democratic countries become democratic or to help countries that have initiated democratic transition consolidate their democratic system [1]. After the end of the Cold War, in parallel with the United States foreign policy of “enlargement of the democratic community”, democracy assistance became a substantial element of development cooperation as a tool for international aid community to support democratization process in the recipient country.

Arguing that free and fair election is a main condition in transition phase, support for election monitoring groups becomes a target of democracy assistance. Election monitoring, both

international and domestic, is designed to ensure whether or not an election was conducted in a free and fair manner. This is important to build domestic and international trust on the election process.

In Indonesia, democracy assistance and election monitoring are relatively new phenomena in its political system. After Soeharto resigned in 1998, under Habibie's reform cabinet, international support in the form of democracy assistance had a formal opening to play a role in the democratic process of Indonesia. The 1999 transitional election and the 2004 election were supported by the donor countries (the US, Australia, Japan, etc) and international organizations such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Moreover, the reform Cabinet allowed the international and domestic citizens' groups to observe the election process, among whom were the three large Indonesian local domestic election monitoring organizations (DEMOS), namely, University Network for free and fair election (UNFREL), Rectors Forum, and KIPP. They were the first DEMOS in Indonesian political history. Although Indonesian DEMOS lacked experience in monitoring election, their activities made the 1999 and 2004 elections significantly different from the elections under Soeharto.

In light of the situations as explained above, this paper argues the importance of analyzing the interaction between domestic and international actors in democratization, focusing on Indonesian DEMOS. Three questions will be explored; first, what are the characteristics of Indonesian DEMOS? Second, how does the relationship between DEMOS and domestic governmental actors such as General Election Committee and external factors such as international aid community (democracy aid providers)? Third, since almost all the DEMOS were supported by international aid community, how has the latter influenced the performance and sustainability of Indonesian DEMOS? Overall, this paper purports to analyze the role of civil society in democratization and the manner in which democracy assistance can help domestic actors at different levels cooperate with each other and actively involve themselves in the democratization of Indonesia.

In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis, this paper is structured as follows. The next section will survey previous study and clarify the concepts of democracy assistance and election monitoring. Third section will explore the characteristics of Indonesian DEMOS and the problems which they are currently facing. The fourth section will analyze the distribution of democracy assistance to Indonesia for the 1999 and 2004 elections. The fifth section will analyze the implications of democracy assistance towards Indonesian DEMOS. Thus, in this section, the impacts of democracy assistance towards performance and sustainability of DEMOS will be explored. The authority to make a final decision lies with the Local Legislative Council, District or State [2]. The final section will conclude.

2.0 DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION MONITORING

Burnell [3] stipulates three components of the concept of democracy assistance. First, democratic advance must be the primary objective of democracy assistance. Second, the methods of the assistance must be peaceful. Third, it is negotiated on a not-for-profit basis (distinct from commercial market transactions). Consequently, democracy assistance should be funded on a grant basis.

Clear [4] offers three approaches in the donor strategy of supporting democratization. The first approach is called state oriented. This focuses on formal and informal institutions which structure the policy making process and determine how society is governed. The State becomes a main actor in providing channels and opportunities for citizens' political participation. Therefore, this approach is categorized as "state reformer" in theories of democratization. The second approach, societal approach, instead focuses either on the behavioural aspects or on the institutions generated by societal initiatives. Since this approach trusts the important role of society in democratization, it can be categorized as "grassroots mobilizer".

Finally, Society-state interaction approach emphasizes that the most critical aspect of democracy is neither the state nor the characteristics of the society, but how the two interact with each other. In other words, it combines the state and society approaches into one coherent whole. She concludes that "a more interactive or relational approach to democratization was necessary in case of Indonesia."

Election monitoring is important because elections are the cornerstone of creating democratic political system (Kumar, 1998). It can be divided into three types [5]. First, international monitoring is conducted by missions sent by governments, multilateral organizations or international NGOs. Second, domestic monitoring is implemented by national organizations, especially nonpartisan NGOs and civic groups. Third, international supervision is organized by intergovernmental organization of post conflict election, referenda, and other self-determination exercise. For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on domestic monitoring and DEMOs.

Sharon Lean, the author of the article titled "International Democracy Assistance to Domestic Election Monitoring," classified two basic models of organization for DEMOs [6]. The first model is a discrete organization created for the specific purpose of monitoring elections, and she called it as stand-alone DEMOs. The second model is a network or coalitions of previously existing organizations that combines efforts and creates a staff infrastructure for the joint activity as election observers (Network DEMOs). Both of these can be found in Indonesian DEMOs.

Considering the effectiveness of DEMOs, Carothers argues that domestic observers have several important advantages over international observers [7]. First, as domestic observers are more familiar with the country and its political environment, they are in a better position to observe the electoral process on a long term basis, and to follow up their findings, which may become a pressing force for needed reforms.

Domestic groups can also involve a large number of citizens in the election process, which international groups cannot. International observers, on the other hand, are better situated than domestic observers to inform the international community about the development in the electoral process, and mobilize international support to domestic actors if necessary. Practically, international observers should be viewed as supplementing the work of domestic observers [8] and Manikas [9].

In Indonesia, inspired by NAMFREL in the Philippines which organized a volunteer citizens' movement dedicated to restoring democracy in the Philippines through free and fair election, the first DEMO was founded in 1996; the Independent Election Monitoring Committee or *Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu* (KIPP). KIPP was founded by about fifty prominent lawyers, intellectuals, NGO leaders, journalists and members of the Indonesian Students

Solidarity for Democracy (SMID). However, the establishment of KIPP became a controversial issue at that time. Soeharto government did not agree with the idea of election monitoring. The government tried to harass and stop the activity of KIPP by establishing some rival organizations and raising the issue of communism against Mulyana W. Kusumah, Secretary General of KIPP [10].

KIPP got support from international community, especially from the United States by way of sending members of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to Indonesia so as to discuss how to monitor the election in 1997 with KIPP members. Unfortunately, the process of election in 1997 under Soeharto was strongly manipulated by the government that KIPP could not do its function as an election observer. Moreover, the Government tended to ignore the existence of KIPP. Although KIPP could not affect the electoral system, the existence of KIPP as a civic group which tried to get itself involved in the election process would become an important precedent for political development of Indonesia.

3.0 DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE TO INDONESIA: THE CASE OF 1999 AND 2004 ELECTION

This part will explore democracy assistance especially for the 1999 and 2004 election from the United States, EU and Japan. US democracy assistance to Indonesia was actively implemented by the USAID, and was unique in some respects. Indonesia had been the largest recipient of US democracy assistance in Asia with US\$ 255.92 million in 16 years from 1990-2005 [11]. The aid was channeled to the government and civil society. At government level, the USAID supported programs such as legal reform, strengthening legislature, elections, etc. At civil society level, the USAID formulated many programs such as women empowerment, fight against corruption, the improvement of political party, etc.

After the decline of the Soeharto government in 1998, USAID's democracy section began implementing a program called "Democratic Transition Strengthened" in Indonesia, and actively providing financial assistance to supporting political reform of Indonesia. For instance, in the 1999 election, the USAID provided financial support to almost two hundred Indonesian NGOs. Specifically, through the Asia Foundation, it funded the People's Voter Education Network (JPPR), consisting of fifteen Indonesian civic organizations including Islam mass organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, to conducting voter education election monitoring. The support of the USAID through Indonesian national democratic institutions (NDIs) also focused on reforming and strengthening Indonesian political parties by providing political party training both in local and national level, and several technical assistance programs [4].

In light of the fact that Indonesia successfully conducted a fair and free election in 1999 and that it made a transition to the world's third largest democracy in terms of population, the US support for election monitoring and voter education was gradually diminished in the 2004 and the 2009 elections. In the 2004 election, USAID provided US\$24 million for electoral assistance, which meant that the fund was decreased about US\$6 million compared to the 1999 election, which the U.S. provided US\$30 million. Moreover, it is important to note that the allocation of fund was managed by the USAID itself, without coordination with the Indonesian General Election Commission, a governmental election administration body (*Suara Merdeka*, July 29, 2003).

The democracy aid of EU to Indonesia began in its aid to the 1999 election. In the 1999 election, EU disbursed US\$7.5 million through the UNDP, which was allocated to supporting voter education and election monitoring programs conducted by Indonesian NGOs. In the 2004 election, EU provided US\$ 8 million, supporting not only voter education and election monitoring but also training poll workers at local General Election Commission or *Komisi Pemilihan Umum* (KPU) at provincial, district and city level, who would work for the election conducted by the Central KPU. Moreover, EU also supported training for the National Election Supervisory Board (PANWAS), so that it might carry out its supervision duties effectively and efficiently in the 1999 election, most of the Japan's aid money (US\$30.97 million) was channeled through the UNDP, and was allocated to covering the technical and material needs such as voter registration, press centers, electoral ink, ballot printing, etc. The remaining US\$3.49 million was allocated to monitoring and voter education by Indonesian NGOs, and to other activities such as sending international observers, and dispatch of training and IT experts to the central and local KPUs for technical advice.

In the 2004 Legislative and Presidential election, however, Japan did not channel their funds to UNDP. Japan's fund was disbursed through a bilateral cooperation scheme. This change can be regarded as an expression of Japan's policy of taking more active and serious role in supporting democratic process in Indonesia. Besides providing the financial assistance to the KPUs for the procurement of electoral equipment (bullet boxes and pooling booths), Japan's fund was also designated to supporting the voter education programs conducted by Indonesian NGOs. In cooperation with the Indonesian government, several Indonesian NGOs (Pemuda Muhammadiyah, LP3ES, Parwi Foundation, LSI and JAMPPPI) was selected to conduct the program in Java, Sulawesi, Sumatera, and West Nusa Tenggara.

The program was aimed at disseminating information on the new election and voting system through the distribution of PR materials, organizing seminars, and through talk shows in radio. Such involvement of NGOs in Japan's aid can be regarded as a positive response to some criticisms against the low profile of NGOs in the former Japanese aid. However, considering that the most fund was distributed to logistics and material supply, Japan's democracy aid, especially for electoral assistance, did not change substantively.

On the other hand, a debate on the implementation of electoral assistance rose in Indonesian society. Critics asserted that electoral assistance from donor countries to governmental organizations such as General Election Commission should not be accepted for two reasons. First, the government has its own budget for running elections. Second, if the KPU received funds from abroad, the KPU could not be independent in doing its duties.

The Indonesian NGOs which received funds from abroad were also criticized as they became channels of donor countries to intervene in Indonesian domestic political life (*Suara Merdeka*, Feb 11, 2003). Moreover, BAPPENAS (National Development and Planning Bureau) was also criticized that the funds from foreign countries were directly given to NGOs and were not reported to BAPPENAS (*Interview*, July 20, 2007).

Against such criticism, the Director of the Centre for Electoral Reform (CETRO) asserted that "as long as the government does not allocate a budget for strengthening civil society, there is no choice for NGOs except to receive funds from foreign countries" (*Interview*, July 25, 2007).

4.0 THE INDONESIAN DEMOS AND DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

According to the slogan of the administration, elections under Soeharto were *Pemilu yang Jujur dan Adil*” (free and fair election). However, actually, election process was unfair and permeated with violence. Elections were free and fair only in their appearance. According to O’Donnell and Schmitter, an authoritarian regime needs some form of electoral legitimacy and a certain extent of freedom so as to make it acceptable to mitigate domestic opposition and international public opinion. Elections under Soeharto were a typical example.

Soeharto conducted elections by using “Free and Fair Election” as slogan, in order to legitimize his regime and to make it acceptable to domestic society and international community. As explained above, prior to the 1997 election under Soeharto, there was only one DEMO in Indonesia, KIPP. Although KIPP faced intimidation from the government, KIPP continued to expand the idea of election monitoring, by opening 26 branches in some provinces. It also successfully deployed 9000 observers in the 1997 election.

In the 1999 transitional election, supported by new government policy which allowed domestic and international society to monitor the election, there was a high demand of monitoring activities. It was indicated by the mushrooming of DEMOs. There were influential DEMOs this time such as UNREL, Rectors Forum, KIPP, JAMMPI and JPPR.

UNFREL was established on December 5, 1998 by a student group, who had been instrumental in the struggle to bringing down Soeharto. Led by the University of Indonesia, fourteen universities decided to monitor the 1999 election. UNFREL placed 159,000 volunteers on monitoring the election in each poll by using a quick counting method. In addition, UNFREL also monitored the “money politics” that would potentially occur before election.

Rectors Forum was established as a means through which for the heads of universities participate in election monitoring, especially in counting and tabulation of votes, called parallel vote tabulation (PVT). The PVT conducted the Rectors Forum consisted of conducting statistical quick counts, sampling the results from about a thousand randomly selected polling stations, and data projection of the final results. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) provided technical assistance for the PVT [12].

KIPP was the only DEMO that had had an experience in election monitoring. In the 1999 election, KIPP decided to monitor only half of the total poll, which meant that KIPP needed at least 135,000 monitors. Although KIPP was experienced, it did not mean that KIPP had no problem in organizing their activities for the 1999 election. They had to work hard in order to enhance the monitoring system, especially training monitors for the operation of an “integrated monitoring system.”

The other DEMOs were Islamic organizations, namely, People’s Election Observation Network of Indonesia (*Jaringan Masyarakat Pemantau Pemilu Indonesia – JAMMPI*) and People’s Voter Education Network (*Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat-JPPR*).

Besides these DEMOs, in the 2004 election, Centre for Electoral Reform (CETRO) and LP3ES were also engaged in election monitoring and voter education activities. CETRO focused their work on the election policy advocacy, while LP3ES as a big and old NGO focused on quick count of polls. However, the quick count conducted by NGOs and DEMOs

were criticized by KPU as overlapping with its task.

The diverse activities of the DEMOs were influenced by the different perspectives of donor countries on how to monitor the election. For instance, in the 1999 election, UNFREL conducted quick count, Rector's Forum conducted parallel vote tabulation, and KIPP conducted integrated election monitoring, supported by different donors respectively. Ex-Chairman of UNFREL and now Director of CETRO, Hadar Nafis Gumay called this situation as lack of coordination among DEMOs and among donor countries. Moreover, he said that each DEMO operated according to its own interest, and that there was no coordination among them. However, we should note that donors contributed to that situation (*Interview, July 25, 2007*).

According to the typology of election monitoring, only a few of Indonesian DEMOs can be classified as stand-alone DEMOs, JAMMPI and KIPP. They focused their activities on election monitoring. The others groups such as Rector Forum, CETRO, LP3ES can be categorized as network DEMOS. In addition, almost all Indonesian DEMOs still depended on foreign support and worked on voluntarism. Dependency on foreign support had a negative impact on the performance and sustainability of Indonesian DEMOs. Voluntarism sometimes put the Indonesia DEMOs into problems of hiring capable staffs.

The Indonesian DEMOs also faced the lack of coordination with the other official election bodies such as KPU, Election Supervision Body (*Badan Pengawas Pemilu-Bawaslu*) in conducting their activities. The director of LP3ES points out the necessary of foreign donors to assist domestic actors (Indonesian DEMOs, KPU, BAWASLU) coordinating with each other, by building a bridge for communication and cooperation, or building synergy among these domestic actors and among Indonesian DEMOs (*Interview, January 09, 2009*). Foreign assistance should thus direct not only at state level but also at civil society level.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Although Indonesian DEMOs lacked experience in monitoring election, their role made the 1999 and 2004 elections significantly different from the elections under Soeharto. Through monitoring election, they could enhance the credibility, legitimacy and quality of elections which had never been achieved during Soeharto's authoritarian regime. As a result, international community recognized that both these elections were conducted in free and fair manner and met with democratic election standards.

However, we should note that without support from international donors through democracy assistance, the Indonesian DEMOs would not have been able to perform their function as well as it did. The role of international donors in supporting democratization of Indonesia can, therefore, not be ignored. In the 1999 election, DEMOs' activities were funded by various donor countries and international organization such as the USAID, the Asia Foundation, the American Center, the EU Japan, Australia and some other countries, whose aid was distributed to election monitoring through the UNDP.

However, arguing that Indonesia conducted the transitional election of 1999 successfully, donor countries diminished their supports for election monitoring of the 2004 election. This was reiterated in the 2009 election, which only a few aid programs were conducted for election monitoring. This resulted in the decrease of Indonesian DEMOs which conducted monitoring

activities. The decreasing number of Indonesian DEMOs shows the financial weaknesses of them.

Considering the importance of the Indonesian DEMOs as part of civil society, strengthening and supporting them should continue to be the priority of foreign aid. By supporting both state and civil society, we can hope the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia.

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