



# Organizing Civil Society: Case Study Of The Formation Of Democratic Volunteers To Increasing Voter Participation in Gowa Regency

A. Hasyim Asyari Amir Husni<sup>1</sup>, A.M Rusli<sup>2</sup>, Suhardiman Syamsu<sup>3</sup>, Zarni Adia Purna<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Hasanuddin University, Makassar, 90245, Indonesia  
namehasyimasyari@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Makassar Public University, Makassar, 90221, Indonesia

**Abstract.** Organizing civil society is one of the steps to increase public participation in political and governmental activities because its presence directly expresses the interests and values of the community in which it operates. This study aims to provide an overview of the factors that influence the performance of “democratic volunteers” as civil society organizations whose role is to increase public participation in general elections. This study uses a qualitative method with the type of case study research in the 2019 Gowa district general election. The collection of data encompassed both primary and secondary sources. This study's primary data collection method involved conducting interviews with selected informants/participants. The researcher created semi-structured questions to guide the interviews, intending to elicit the informants' perspectives and insights on specific themes highlighted in the study. The results show that four things influence its activities, namely the independence aspect in the recruitment process, proportional distribution of resources from the Gowa district general election commission, patterns and communication methods used in its implementation, and geographical factors in the area of operation.

**Keywords:** Civil Society Organizations, Public Participation, General Elections

## 1 Introduction

Community participation is necessary to develop an inclusive nature in state administration, not only in how a government runs but also in generating political legitimacy in government bodies. One way is through general elections. In general elections, public participation is needed to provide legitimacy to elected leaders in implementing government. Because legitimacy will influence the attitude towards the policies issued, it fosters trust in the government and the public's willingness to participate in the programs implemented [1], [2].

This is then expected to run linearly with the progress of democracy in Indonesia. Community sensitivity in overseeing the running of each government segment is very

© The Author(s) 2024

A. R. Cangara et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the World Conference on Governance and Social Sciences (WCGSS 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 843,

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-236-1\\_69](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-236-1_69)

much needed because society is not only a prerequisite for democracy but is the main component in realizing the desired welfare state [3]. The work that must be done next is how to raise the value of people's sensitivity to socio-political issues, not just waiting for awareness to emerge immediately but requiring a significant contribution from the government in forming a system that can stimulate the emergence of this sensitivity [4].

One form that then emerged was organizing civil society or what was known as the Civil Society Organization (CSO). With proper organization, it is hoped that community sensitivity will emerge to guard the democratic process in political and governmental activities. In some countries, this practice tends to be successful [5], considering that CSOs appear to express community interests in their area of operation. CSOs are non-state entities that emerged as independent social movements that took on the role of government pressure groups, but in their development, the nature of CSOs could then be reconceptualized as a way to raise social awareness in government administration [6]. This article does not intend to question the definition and differences between CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Instead, it emphasizes how the government organizes the nature and strength of civil society as the main basis for increasing community participation in government political activities.

## **2 Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Civil Society Organizations Power**

CSO is an abbreviation of Civil Society Organizations or Civil Society Organizations in the context of democracy, referring to the critical role played by civil society groups in supporting, monitoring, and strengthening the democratic system [7]. The concept of CSOs in democracy is essential because they are an integral part of the three main pillars of a democratic system: government, civil society, and the private sector [8].

The role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in democratic elections is crucial. Together with the government and the general public, they act as the third pillar in the democratic system [9]. CSOs often act as independent observers who monitor and examine the general election process. They ensure that elections take place fairly, transparently, and under democratic standards. Their reports can help uncover election violations and promote accountability [10]. CSOs can also help increase voter participation levels by educating the public [11], [12]. They provide information about candidates, political platforms, and election processes to help citizens make informed decisions [13].

The critical role of CSOs in electoral democracy is that they help maintain the integrity of elections, ensure greater public participation, and promote accountability in the political process [11], [14]. They also help create an environment in which elections can be considered legitimate, and their results can be accepted by society at large [15].

### **2.2 Volunteers Democracy**

The democracy volunteers formed by the general election commission are a form of civil society organizing with an agenda to increase awareness of participation through

socialization and improve the quality of general elections through increasing political literacy [16]. For the record, Gowa district, which was the research location, showed a fairly good trend in voter participation since the formation of democracy volunteers at each general election moment. In 2019, public participation in the simultaneous general elections reached 80.17%. The participation rate 2019 increased by 4% from the 2018 South Sulawesi gubernatorial election, around 76%. However, there was a slight decline in the regional head general election in 2020 to 79.17 percent. Despite these fluctuations, Gowa district voter participation was above the national target of 77%.

Conceptually, democracy volunteers are formed linearly with new institutionalism in a democracy that pays attention to social inclusiveness, has a communitarian nature, and represents civil society, especially for community groups that have been marginal units in the social structure [17]. So, it is not surprising that democracy volunteers then move to target groups that are considered vulnerable and have low accessibility to democratic resources. This group includes people with disabilities [18], the elderly [19], women [20], first-time voters [21] and netizens [22].

Democracy volunteers, as an organized community movement, are expected to fulfill the ideal role of CSOs as mediators of community and government interests, channels for articulating interests, stimuli for the emergence of social networks, and enlarge civic capacity in collaborative development schemes. It doesn't stop there; CSOs can also function as a medium for long-term social transformation; thus, not only can participation be increased, but also the community's capacity to access democratic resources.

It seems that the status of democratic volunteers organized by government institutions gives rise to another face of CSO activity, which in principle appears and moves independently because one of the obstacles to CSO independence arises from government institutional factors such as the nature of the regime, the nature of resource distribution and decentralization and various other aspects [23]. This is then relevant to the findings of Kusumaputra regarding disharmony in the position, status, and function of democracy volunteers [24].

### **3 Research Methods**

This article was prepared using qualitative methods with an intrinsic case study research type. Data analysis was carried out using single-level analysis on a single case. Data was collected by interviewing members of democracy volunteers and the Gowa district general election commission to explore everything that directly influenced their work process.

The collection of data encompassed both primary and secondary sources. This study's primary data collection method involved conducting interviews with selected informants/participants. The researcher created semi-structured questions to guide the interviews, elicit the informants' perspectives, and gather information related to the defined topics of the study. The informants were asked open and direct questions to facilitate their progression toward the point of saturation.

The secondary data encompasses various sources such as books, journals, internet sources, and reports from civil societies and other international institutions directly engaging with civil societies.

## 4 Result and Discussion

The results of research regarding the factors that influence democracy volunteers in carrying out their duties as an organized civil society can be seen based on the following four things, namely:

### 4.1 Recruitment

Unlike CSOs in general, democratic volunteers did not emerge as a dialectical result of social sensitivity and political awareness of the community but rather were formed by the Gowa Regency General Election Commission. The process is through letter Number 02/PP.08-PU/04/7306/KPU-Kab/I/2019, wherein points in a letter are several things the author highlights. The first is that democracy volunteers are not the family of election organizers without clear competence. This is intended to maintain integrity and prevent the KPU from conflicts of interest that may be present in the course of the program, but the absence of clear boundaries regarding the 'competencies' that must be possessed outside of general prerequisites such as being 17 years old and having a high school diploma gives rise to free interpretation of the recruitment process.

In the end, competency is not essential to the democratic volunteer recruitment process. The KPU can freely include family/relatives as part of the democracy volunteers. Apart from that, if we look at the intention to prevent conflicts of interest, there is a big difference between the concept of family and kinship between Indonesia in general and European and American countries. In Western countries, preventing recruitment from the family to prevent conflicts of interest can quickly be done because the kinship system is small and limited in scope, while in Indonesia, the concept of kinship is comprehensive and involves several generational levels.

Relevant to establishing CSOs and increasing democracy in society, representative characteristics have been sought in the recruitment process where each member of the democratic volunteers must reside in the local area. On the other hand, increasing participation in groups with low resource accessibility has also been pursued by paying special attention to the representation of communities in inland and island areas and the representation of members of certain communities, people with disabilities, and religious communities. This category of community members vulnerable to the entry of sympathizers of certain political figures will be discussed further.

Non-partisanship or not being an affiliate of a particular contestant or political party is another concern because non-partisan boundaries are less clear when faced with political realities and general election practices in Indonesia. Several things underlie this, namely, first, being non-partisan means not being an active administrator of a political party. However, it does not provide clear limits on the partisanship of wing organizations under the influence of certain political parties. Second, the practice of general elections in Indonesia is not partisan-based but rather patrimonial, so it does not rule

out the possibility that members of democracy volunteers are sympathizers or are culturally and emotionally tied to certain political figures.

## 4.2 Resource

Each organization can only move because it has sufficient resources to implement its program. There are at least three ways for CSOs to fulfill their resources, namely through self-help by their members, through partnerships with other organizations, and the final way by getting grant assistance from donor agencies. In self-supporting areas, organizations are required to have independent sources of funding, but allocations to programs will be very limited, and CSO human resource development will be more focused on raising funds rather than realizing programs [25]. In a partnership pattern, the burden of material resources and financial resources can be met using a sharing method that can cover each other's weaknesses. Meanwhile, through donor agencies, it can be ensured that resources can be sufficient as long as they are relevant to the program of the donor agency, which is usually a particular NGO [26].

Things are slightly different for democracy volunteers. As a civil society organization formed by the government, the resources possessed by democracy volunteers result from distribution by the Gowa Regency KPUD as the parent of the social movement. Therefore, in terms of financing, the budget for democracy volunteers is part of the KPU's DIPA for the current year. However, the KPUD can recruit volunteer members in numbers exceeding the specified quota (55 people) provided it does not burden the budget stated in the DIPA. Dependence on the government budget then makes democracy volunteers less creative and innovative in implementing programs because the budget provided follows a bureaucratic financial accountability system.

Finally, methods considered effective in solving problems in certain places cannot be implemented due to limited resource allocation. Apart from that, the generalization of resource allocation seems to affect the performance of democracy volunteers. Relevant programs implemented for certain groups may not necessarily be effective for other community groups as well as for regions. Coastal areas have different characteristics from mountainous and urban areas, so generalizing regional characteristics and community needs will impact the generalization of the resources provided, directly impacting the performance of democracy volunteers. This is then following Hailey and Salwa [27]. A funding environment that is highly dependent on limited core funding. This will make the organization an entity that operates without much innovation for sectoral development. On the other hand, disproportionate distribution of resources will make CSOs vulnerable to internal conflict, hampered internal communication, morality problems, and reduced productivity [27].

## 4.3 Communication Patterns

Communication patterns then become one of the factors that determine the success of democracy volunteers in carrying out their duties; as previously written, democracy volunteers work in several different age layers of society, different social groups, and different regions. For example, elderly people find it difficult to provide socialization due to age factors and the grammar used, while young voters use less formal social

language. Another example is conducting voter outreach in coastal areas where most of the residents are fishermen, who will have very different communication patterns from mountain communities where most people are farmers or gardeners [28], [29].

In democracy volunteers in Gowa Regency, there are at least general problems found in the work process, namely first, lack of enthusiasm from the community, only certain parties attended the socialization, such as community leaders, RT, and RW, second, lack of concern from the community such as women's groups, especially mothers, first-time voters who sometimes refuse to be given socialization. Third, the indifferent attitude shown by the public when given socialization because it coincided with the holy month of Ramadan and the 2019 World Cup. Fourth, the public thought that whether they voted or not was the same because it would not impact their lives, and fifth, they were disappointed with the last election moment. All of these things happen because decreasing trust in political institutions will cause the level of political participation to also decrease because people choose to express disappointment by being apathetic towards the existing process [30]. Seeing this, implementing appropriate communication patterns for each particular motive is very important to pay attention because contemporary politics depends on and is interconnected with the media and communication patterns [31].

#### **4.4 Geographic Factors**

The geographical factor is an obstacle in organizing democracy volunteers in the work area of 18 scattered sub-districts, and some of the areas are very difficult to reach and have steep topography. If you go to the location, you have to pass through plantations, rocky roads that have not yet been asphalted, holes, and winding roads with ravines on either side. In matters of carrying out tasks, the recruitment of democratic volunteers as representatives of the population in the region certainly makes implementation easier, but the obstacle is the coordination and supervision system for the course of socialization. It needs to be underlined that the democratic volunteer recruitment system is very vulnerable to being filled by sympathizers of certain political figures, so it is important to carry out monitoring attached to their work activities; therefore, the accessibility of operational areas is a factor that can hinder the process of monitoring and organizing the community significantly, geographical factors greatly determine how future monitoring and evaluation will relate to the organization's willingness to improve and accelerate the ability of CSOs to become agents of social change. At some levels of monitoring, communication flow is the most important factor. Still, in some cases, CSOs with field staff who are paid low wages, do not have sufficient competence, and have low commitment tend to be unable to work in difficult situations with extreme regional conditions [32].

Geographical factors relate to the physical shape of the earth's surface and the cultural landscape related to the socio-economic conditions of society—for example, coastal and island communities. So, democracy volunteers also work based on this cultural landscape. The methods and strategies of the socialization and communication process will be very different in each existing landscape.

## 5 Conclusion

Organizing civil society forces is the latest way the government can increase community participation by raising awareness of social sensitivities that emerge from within society. Instead of prioritizing partnerships with third parties or collaborative methods with other government institutions, forming democratic volunteers is considered a method that uses more inclusive and communitarian-based democratic principles, which are felt to be very effective in coming into direct contact with these social sensitivities. Due to the different socio-cultural structures of society, generalization patterns cannot be applied in organizing CSOs. There are at least four factors that determine the success of organizing a CSO, especially the formation of democratic volunteers, namely the aspect of independence in the recruitment process, proportional distribution of resources from the Gowa district general election commission, communication patterns, and methods used in its implementation and geographical factors in the area of operation.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in the framework of democracy, serving as essential advocates and intermediaries between the government and civil society. CSOs fulfill their advocacy role by promoting equitable and transparent policy reform, fostering government responsibility, and engaging the public in decision-making procedures. The educational and empowerment initiatives they pursue improve political knowledge and facilitate more engagement. CSO defends core principles by advocating for human rights, social fairness, and environmental preservation. During the general election, they played a crucial role by closely monitoring the electoral process, enhancing voter engagement, and safeguarding the integrity of the electoral system. CSO plays a constructive role in shaping a democratic, inclusive, and sustainable society.

## References

1. P. A. Gwaza, "Civil Society Organizations and Regional Integration: The ECOWAS Perspective," *SSRN Electron. J.*, Sep. 2015, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2567272.
2. S. Kim, "Far-Right Local Governments and Civil Society: Findings from France and Italy," *Polit. Stud. Rev.*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 183–189, Sep. 2022, doi: 10.1177/14789299221079990.
3. C. Kurzman and E. Gellner, "Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals," *Soc. Forces*, vol. 74, no. 1, 1995, doi: 10.2307/2580639.
4. T. Girard, "Participatory ambiguity and the emergence of the global financial inclusion agenda," *Rev. Int. Polit. Econ.*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 1698–1722, 2022, doi: 10.1080/09692290.2021.1936593.
5. J. J. Schoenefeld, "Interest Groups, NGOs or Civil Society Organisations? The Framing of Non-State Actors in the EU," *Voluntas*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2021, doi: 10.1007/s11266-020-00283-w.
6. N. Bolleyer, *The state and civil society: Regulating interest groups, parties, and public benefit organizations in contemporary democracies.* 2018. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780198758587.001.0001.

7. P. Dronkers, "When Being a Good Samaritan is Not Good Enough: Church Sanctuary and Privileged Responsibility," *J. Refug. Stud.*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 1386–1404, 2022, doi: 10.1093/jrs/feac011.
8. N. Zeegers, "Civil society organizations' participation in the EU and its challenges for democratic representation," *Polit. Gov.*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 27–39, 2016, doi: 10.17645/pag.v4i4.782.
9. M. Sloboda, K. Staroňová, and A. P. Suchalová, "Enhancing law-making efficiency, public value or both: Case study of e-participation platform in Slovakia," in *Engaging Citizens in Policy Making: e-Participation Practices in Europe*, Institute of Public Policy, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2022, pp. 71–90. [Online]. Available: <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85130125755&partnerID=40&md5=87e027f260ebbbbc018106e48b9a9561>
10. M. K. Uddin, "NGOs' approach to human rights and the challenges in Bangladesh," *Dev. Policy Rev.*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2023, doi: 10.1111/dpr.12667.
11. P. A. Onuh and C. C. Ike, "Civil Society Organizations and electoral credibility in Nigeria," *Africa Rev.*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 233–250, 2021, doi: 10.1080/09744053.2021.1941694.
12. J. Lorch, "Philippine Civil Society and Democratic Regression under Duterte: Connivance, Resistance, and Legacies of Elite Co-optation in the Context of a Weak State1," in *Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Asia*, Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, Germany: Taylor and Francis, 2022, pp. 59–76. doi: 10.4324/9781003256809-5.
13. J. de Clerck-Sachsse, "Civil Society and Democracy in the EU: The Paradox of the European Citizens' Initiative," *Perspect. Eur. Polit. Soc.*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 299–311, 2012, doi: 10.1080/15705854.2012.702574.
14. M. Priestley et al., "The political participation of disabled people in Europe: Rights, accessibility and activism," *Elect. Stud.*, vol. 42, pp. 1–9, 2016, doi: 10.1016/j.electstud.2016.01.009.
15. X. Gao and J. Teets, "Civil society organizations in China: Navigating the local government for more inclusive environmental governance," *China Inf.*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 46–66, 2021, doi: 10.1177/0920203X20908118.
16. A. Rafni and S. Suryanef, "Roles of Democratic Volunteers in Developing Political Literacy," *MIMBAR, J. Sos. dan Pembang.*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2017, doi: 10.29313/mimbar.v33i1.2069.
17. M. Bevir, "Democratic governance: A Genealogy," *Local Gov. Stud.*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2011, doi: 10.1080/03003930.2011.539860.
18. Mas Indra Putra Alamsyah and Arif Nasution, "Analisis Peran Relawan Demokrasi Basis Pemilih Disabilitas Dalam Menaikkan Tingkat Kepedulian Partisipasi Politik di Kota Medan Pada Pemilihan Umum 2019," *Talent. Conf. Ser. Local Wisdom, Soc. Arts.*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2020, doi: 10.32734/lwsa.v3i3.917.
19. A. Rosalina, Rafni, "Peran Relawan Demokrasi dalam Sosialisasi Pemilihan Umum Serentak 2019 pada Pemilih Lanjut Usia di Kabupaten Solok," *J. Civ. Educ.*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2018.
20. H. Hariyanti and H. Hambali, "Identifikasi Kendala Relawan Demokrasi Basis Perempuan sebagai Fasilitator Pendidikan Pemilih di Kota Pekanbaru dan Kota Dumai," *J. Moral Civ. Educ.*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.24036/8851412512020490.
21. B. A. S. Susilatuti DN, Adi Soeprapto, "Relawan Demokrasi Sebagai Komunikator Politik bagi Pemilih Pemula," *Pros. KNK ISKI*, vol. 5, 2015.
22. M. I. Putra Alamsyah, M. A. Nasution, and R. H. Harahap, "Analisis Sosialisasi Politik Relawan Demokrasi Basis Warga Internet Kota Medan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 2019," *PERSPEKTIF*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.31289/perspektif.v10i1.3923.



23. P. P. Houtzager, "Introduction: From polycentrism to The polity," *Changing Paths: International Development and The New Politics of Inclusion*. 2003.
24. A. Kusumaputra, E. Retnowati, and R. Winarno, "Problematika Pembentukan Relawan Demokrasi Dalam Penyelenggaraan Pemilu Serentak 2019," *Tanjungpura Law J.*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2020, doi: 10.26418/tj.v4i1.37515.
25. P. Rotprasoet, J. Dongjit, and P. Webb, "Community Democracy and the Promotion of Local Development," *SSRN Electron. J.*, Sep. 2023, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.4522333.
26. C. Hwang, J. Kim, and S. Hasan, "Philanthropy and the Third Sector in Korea: Overview, Extent, Activities, and Impacts," *SSRN Electron. J.*, Sep. 2017, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3010899.
27. J. Hailey and M. Salway, "New routes to CSO sustainability: the strategic shift to social enterprise and social investment," *Dev. Pract.*, vol. 26, no. 5, 2016, doi: 10.1080/09614524.2016.1188886.
28. D. P. Shayo, "Citizen Participation in Local Government Elections in the Age of Crowdsourcing: Explorations and Considerations in Tanzania," *SSRN Electron. J.*, Sep. 2021, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3871844.
29. R. Niswaty, A. C. Nur, S. Rijal, I. Dhahri, and N. Nasaruddin, "Democratization and Performance of General Election Commission on Implementation of Simultaneously Province Regional Election," *SSRN Electron. J.*, Sep. 2019, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3515744.
30. S. Livingstone and T. Markham, "The contribution of media consumption to civic participation1," *Br. J. Sociol.*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2008, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-4446.2008.00197.x.
31. D. Vozab, "Communication models of civil society organizations in Croatia," *Obs.*, vol. 0, no. 0, 2012, doi: 10.7458/obs000578.
32. K. Khan, A. Waheed, and S. Iqbal, "Monitoring and evaluation: Civil Society Organisations' competitive edge in effective poverty alleviation," *Pak. Dev. Rev.*, vol. 42, no. 4 II, 2003, doi: 10.30541/v42i4iipp.909-924.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

