Republic of Indonesia
Ministry of Disadvantaged Region

Evolution and Challenges of Civil Society Organizations in Promoting Democratization in Indonesia

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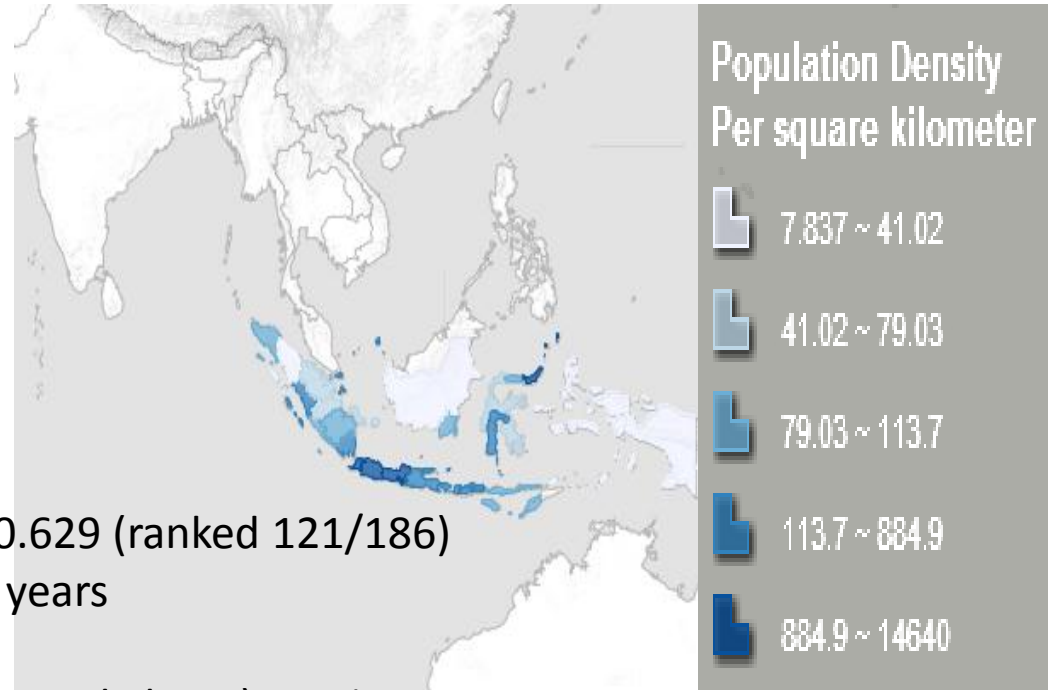
Indonesia Country Context

FAST FACTS:

- Population (2012): 246.9 million
- GDP (2012): $878.0 billion
- GDP per capita (2012): $3,557
- GDP growth (2012): 6.2%
- Inflation (2012): 4.3%
- Human Development Index (2012): 0.629 (ranked 121/186)
- Mean Years of Schooling (2010): 5.8 years
- Literacy Rates (2011):
  - Adult total (% of people ages 15 and above): 96%
  - Adult Male (% of males ages 15 and above): 90%
  - Adult Female (% of females ages 15 and above): 93%
- Life Expectancy at Birth (2011): 70 years
- Poverty Headcount at national poverty line (% of population):
  - 2012: 12.0%
  - 2010: 13.3%
  - 2008: 15.4%
- Access to Information Law: Passed in 2008
- Form of Government: Multiparty Republic with two legislative houses

Population Density
Per square kilometer

7.837 ~ 41.02

41.02 ~ 79.03

79.03 ~ 113.7

113.7 ~ 884.9

884.9 ~ 14640

Introduction

❑ **A strong civil society is recognized as an <u>important contributor to both launching and sustaining a transition to democratic governance</u>.**

❑ **Indonesia is an important example of a newly democratizing country**, whose progress has implications for its own citizens, for other nations moving toward democracy as well as international organizations.

❑ **The political space and freedom that civil society enjoyed in the immediate post-transition years are increasingly challenged by competing political interests**, whereas remarkable progress in the area of civic participation was made during the *reformation* period.

❑ The first two post-Suharto presidents, the Habibie and Wahid governments:
  ➢ *loosened controls on the press;*
  ➢ *paved the way for independence in East Timor;*
  ➢ *initiated an ambitious program of decentralization;*
  ➢ *established special autonomy packages for Aceh and Papua;*
  ➢ *began reforming the electoral system;*
  ➢ *and took important first steps to reduce the role of the military in politics and the economy.*

❑ As any newly democratizing country, after decades of authoritarianism, Indonesia's **democratic transition faces persistent challenges**, as many state officials have not embraced the new procedures and standards that accompany decentralization and democratic reform.

Democratization in Indonesia

❑ Indonesia is typical of a country under the third wave of democratization, that experienced **more than three decades of centralized and authoritarian rule, dominated by a single party that concentrated power in the president and an entrenched bureaucracy** (referred to as 'the New Order').

❑ Since 1998, Indonesia has **introduced wide-sweeping decentralization reforms, shifting resources and decision-making power to more local levels of government** with the intent of buttressing democratic rule.

❑ The country has seen radical changes in the relationship between government and citizens in two main respects:

➢ **Indonesia has moved from a repressive authoritarian regime to a democracy.**
- Competitive general elections have been held three times.
- Freedom of speech and assembly has been established, creating a vibrant public sphere.
- As a result of more open local elections, some impressive local reformers have been elected and they have brought real changes to their communities.
- Indonesia is now labelled by Freedom House as a free and democratic country.

➢ **Indonesia has gone from a highly centralized government to one characterized by decentralized governance.**
- Around 500 subnational governments have been empowered to deliver public services and local legislative councils control budgets and regulations, taking regional differences and needs into account.

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Recent CSO History in Indonesia

- *During the 1990s*, a regulation of the **Ministry of Home Affairs in 1990 formalized the role of civil society to have cooperation and allowed selected NGOs to become partners with government in development projects**, whose acted either as **complementary service providers and/or as implementing agents of government programs** that <u>could not otherwise reach the lowest strata of society</u>, which covered various development programs such as health services, nutrition, clean water and sanitation, family planning, non-formal education, microcredit, small enterprises, informal sector joint ventures, cooperatives, and the like. **With the collapse of the authoritarian government in 1998,** <u>these restrictions on civil society and citizen participation were largely removed</u>. Democratic elections in 1999 allowed new political actors in local legislative councils (DPRD) to come to power.

- *During the 2000s*, direct elections of local heads of government starting in 2005 have led to the **emergence of more responsive leaders**. The implementation of **decentralization since 2001 has allowed for local innovation**, and has moved decision-making processes closer to citizens. <u>**Freedom of association and of speech**</u> has meant that organized civil society can play a larger role in public life. <u>**Local government officials are beginning to open their doors to citizen and NGO input, in spite of suspicions and caution on both sides**</u>.

- *Over the past ten years (2004-2014)* the **number of civil society groups throughout Indonesia has grown dramatically**. Democratization has created space for Indonesian civil society activists to **participate in establishing rights and mechanisms of accountability** in a society where citizen involvement was previously discouraged. **Regional autonomy and decentralization have created new opportunities for organized citizens to engage in public affairs.**

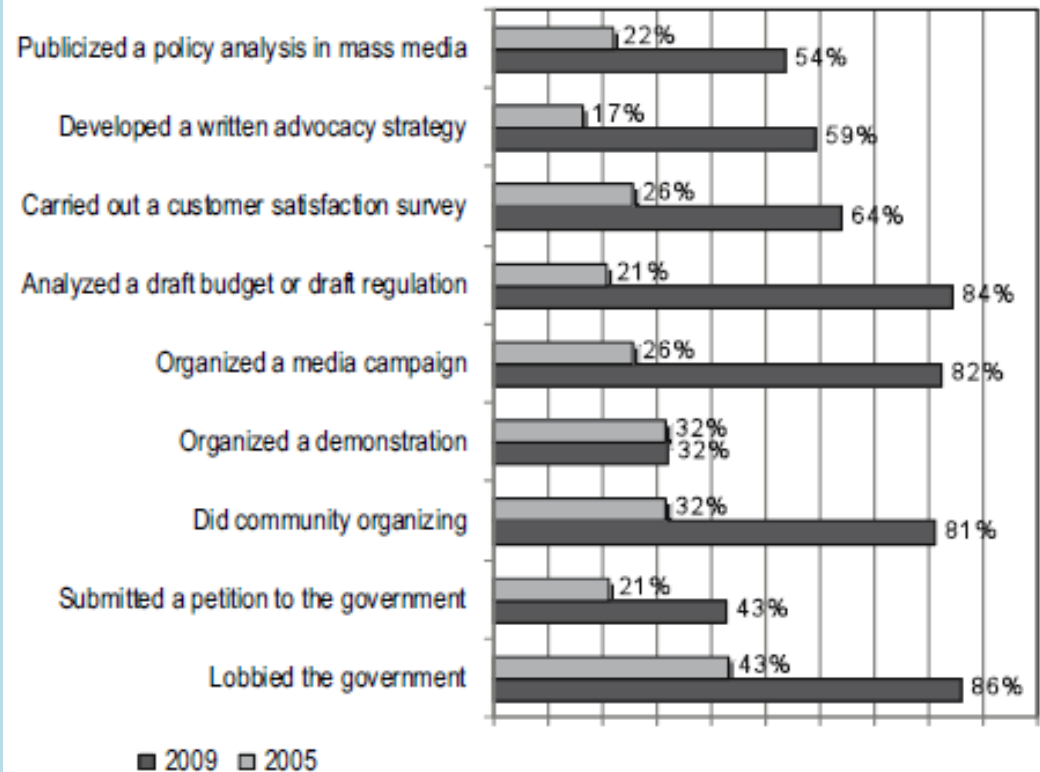# CSOs in Democratization Process and Changes of Citizen Engagement in Indonesia

- **Indonesia is a relatively young democracy**, with much of the public administration and governance structures from the previous authoritarian regime still intact. There is still **lingering distrust between civil society activists and government officials**.

- Democratization has opened the door to new advocacy roles for civil society, and CSOs born in the years of protest often see themselves as opponents of the government, and **look with suspicion at cooperation with state actors**.

- **Government of Indonesia has made significant progress in expanding the space for citizen participation, especially at sub-national levels**, but many public officials are **still ambivalent about the political role of CSOs and activist citizens in general**.

- In the past, many CSOs used a standard method of advocacy, a legacy of the *reformation* period (1998-1999): organize a public advocacy campaign and take to the streets to mount rallies and demonstrations outside government offices

- Civil society activism has contributed substantially to:
  - increasing **participation and transparency** in Indonesia;
  - building the **legal and institutional infrastructure** for democracy;
  - and providing **voice and advocacy** in support of reform.

- Looking ahead, **two categories** are of predominant salience in today's Indonesia where some observers have become concerned about democratic backsliding and persistent political cronyism: **political and governance factors**, and **legal and administrative factors**.

The following figures, based on the article of Antlov and Wetterberg in 2011, exhibit how *the nature of CSO engagement has changed over the past five years in Indonesia.*
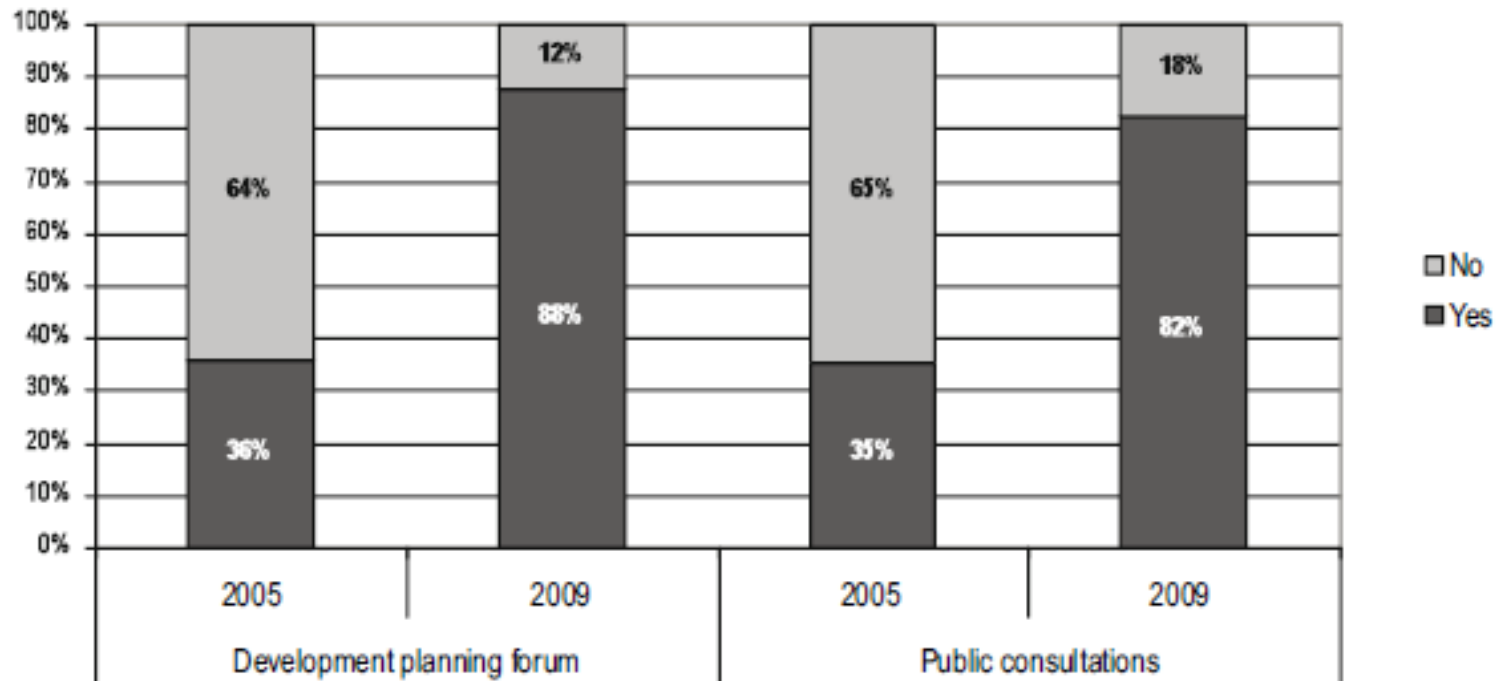
Forms of CSOs' engagement, 2005–2009

- ❑ In recent years, there have been both an **overall increase and a change in the type of CSO engagement in Indonesia** (Figure to the right), that reflects the **increasing democratization and diversification of local politics.**
- ❑ **Almost all types of activities show a dramatic increase**, with the notable exception of demonstrations, which have remained the same at 32 percent.
- ❑ If demonstrating was the second most common activity reported in 2005 it was the least common in 2009.
- ❑ **CSOs have added on methods to their repertoire**, aiming to communicate more nuanced information to government officials.
- ❑ **Budget and regulatory analysis show the largest relative increase**.
- ❑ Civic engagement in the **participatory planning and budgeting processes** is a critical step in **ensuring government responsiveness to citizen needs**.

Publicized a policy analysis in mass media — 22%, 54%
Developed a written advocacy strategy — 17%, 59%
Carried out a customer satisfaction survey — 26%, 64%
Analyzed a draft budget or draft regulation — 21%, 84%
Organized a media campaign — 26%, 82%
Organized a demonstration — 32%, 32%
Did community organizing — 32%, 81%
Submitted a petition to the government — 21%, 43%
Lobbied the government — 43%, 86%

■ 2009 ☐ 2005

Source: Antlov and Wetteberg, 2011

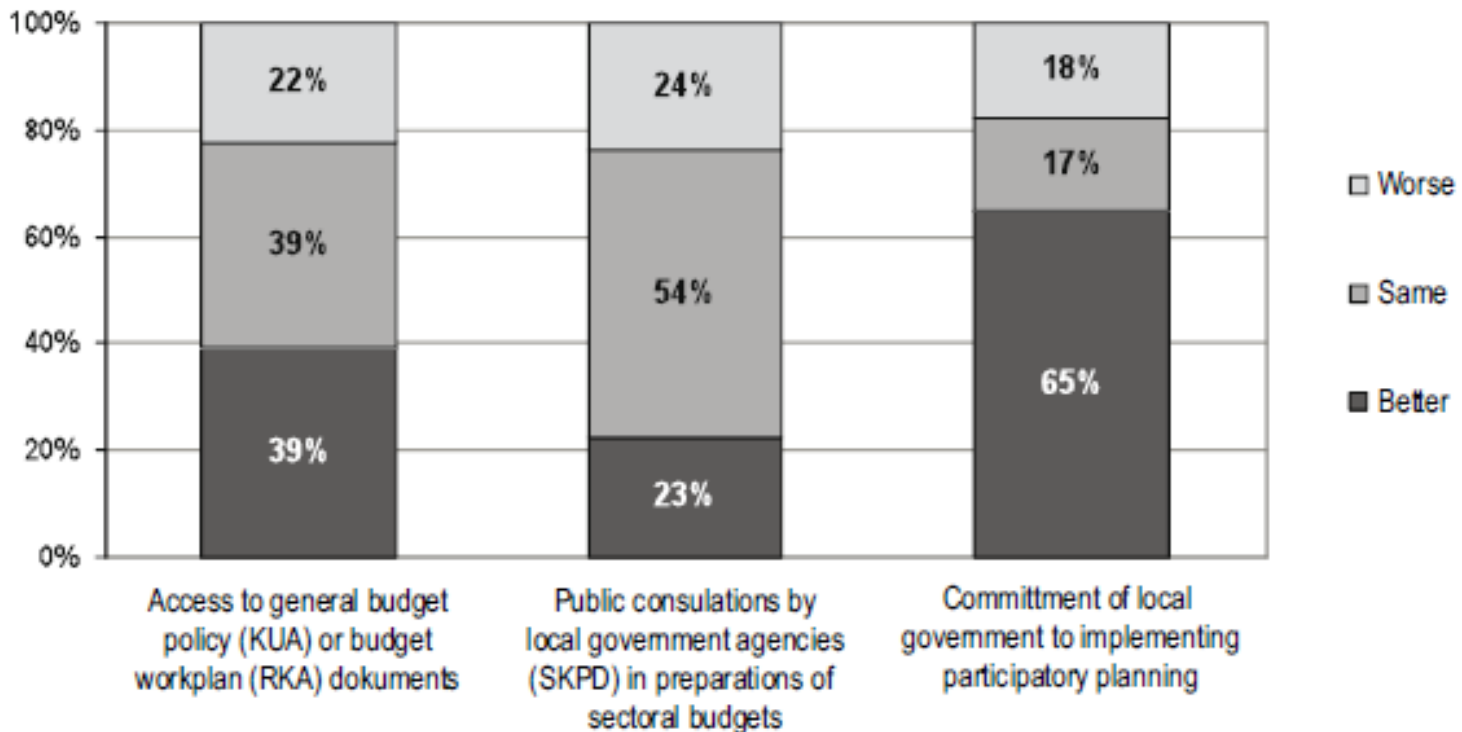# CSO involvement in Public Consultation, 2005-2009

Overall, as can be seen from Figure below, **there are encouraging signs that civil society engagement in government planning and decision-making processes is becoming more common**. Whereas only around 35 percent of CSOs said they had been involved in public consultations and planning meetings (*Musrenbang*) in 2005, *more than 80 percent* had done so by 2009.

Source: Antlov and Wetteberg, 2011

Changes perceived by CSOs in local government commitment to citizen participation, 2005–2009
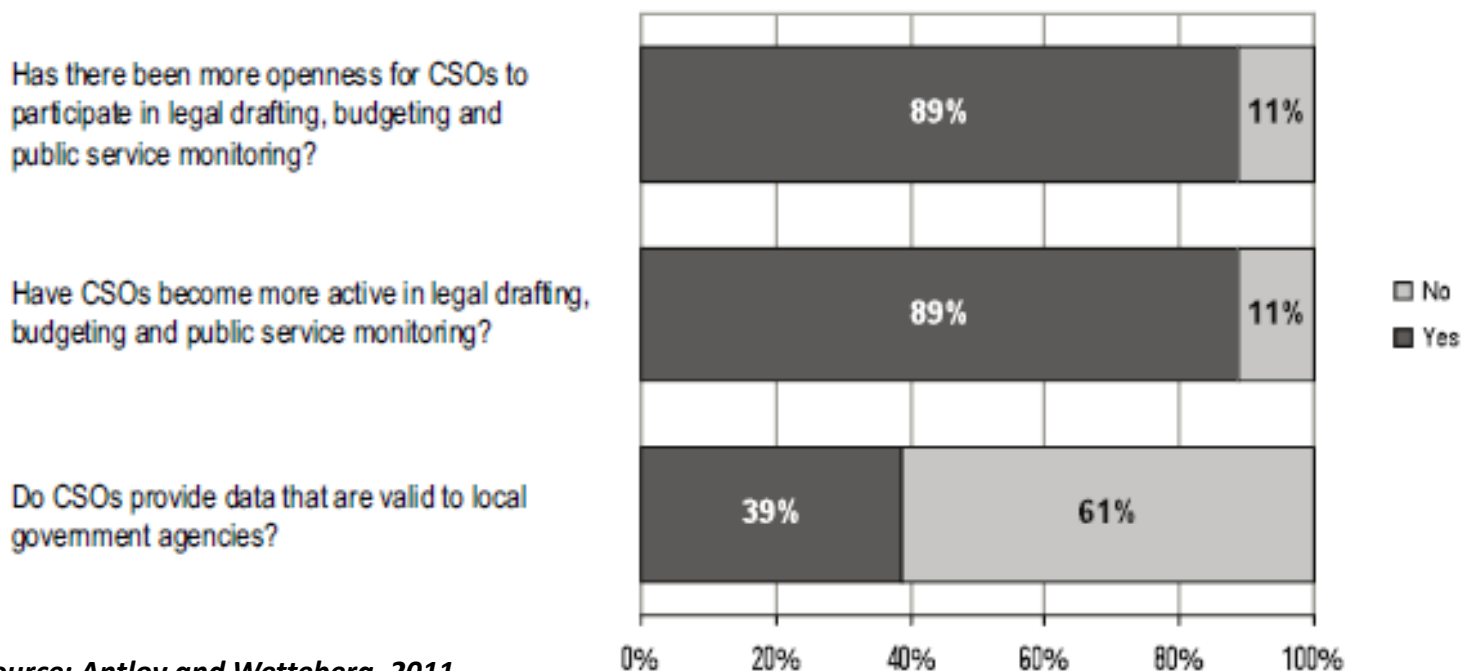
Given that there is **evidence of greater involvement of civil society organizations in the operation of local government processes**, what does this mean for relations between citizens and government? How do they perceive each other? As seen in Figure below, **CSOs have a generally positive perception of the changes in local government commitment and of their access to official documents**.

Source: Antlov and Wetteberg, 2011

Local government perceptions of changes in openness and CSO capacity, 2005-2009

- ❑ **Government officials felt quite strongly that CSOs had become more engaged: 89 percent of government staff felt that more opportunities had been provided to CSOs and that civil society was more willing to engage with the government (a significant increase in trust).**
- ❑ Despite these achievements, one issue that CSOs still need to address is the **perceived quality of their input**: 61 percent of government officials felt that CSOs did not provide accurate data.
- ❑ Government officials thus remained **reluctant to fully embrace the input provided by CSOs**, many of which were still inexperienced and had enthusiasm that might have run ahead of analytical capacity

Has there been more openness for CSOs to participate in legal drafting, budgeting and public service monitoring?	89%	11%
Have CSOs become more active in legal drafting, budgeting and public service monitoring?	89%	11%
Do CSOs provide data that are valid to local government agencies?	39%	61%

☐ No
■ Yes

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Source: Antlov and Wetteberg, 2011

Challenges for Civic Engagement in Local Government

- ❑ Regional autonomy and democratization have opened up the **political space for citizens to become active in governing their own communities**, while decentralization promises that **decision-making will become more transparent and accountable** as it is pushed downwards and closer to people. In fact, decentralization is often quoted as a **prerequisite for the growth of local democracy**.

- ❑ **There are a myriad of ways in which civil society organizations can engage in local governance issues**, including advocacy and community development. Most civil society organizations have decided to monitor what the local government and parliament are doing, while others have decided either to establish partnerships with local government officials or to engage in government projects as subcontractors.

- ❑ The result of citizen engagement in local governance is **dependent on the quality of participation** – which is <u>not simply about involving people,</u> **but also dependent on** <u>who is involved</u> and <u>how the involvement is governed</u>.

- ❑ Although civic engagement **allows for the participation of people who were previously left on the outside** and although it **also helps open up local governance**, there is nevertheless a lack of massive civic engagement in governance issues in Indonesia. Civil society **organizations lack the capacity to promote viable political alternatives**, which has been observed through the **lack of CSO political skills and the uneasiness with which CSOs engage with government or political parties.**

- ❑ Considering that advances in civil society in Indonesia have thus only to a **very limited degree led to public sector reforms and citizen participation**, civil society **attention might be more usefully directed towards developing new organizational forms**. These organizational forms will not only build on citizen forums and the various watchdog organizations; they will also be more focused politically on questioning the power of the bureaucrats and **building a more sustainable civic engagement in development**.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

❑ The analysis of CSOs working to deepen democracy in Indonesia reveals the **importance of the external factors in setting limits on what civil society can do**, and how in particular the <u>factors related to politics and governance</u>, **and to the <u>legal and administrative framework</u> have <u>constrained CSO efforts to expand democratic space and engage with the state</u>**.

❑ The pro-democracy movement arose from **Indonesians' dissatisfaction with the authoritarian government's failure to deliver socioeconomic benefits and a desire for change**.

❑ As civil society entities **embodying social change**, and **serving as contributors to specific governance reforms**, democracy-promotion CSOs **are objects of suspicion and criticism** for **weaknesses and failures in both realms**.

❑ It is in the working out in Indonesia of a **more constructive relationship between state and civil society** that Indonesian democracy will be consolidated and deepened. Looking forward, a **key challenge** for **democracy-promotion CSOs** will be **renegotiating their identity and place in Indonesian society**.

❑ **The experience of Indonesia** offers food for thought for **civil society activists in other countries** and the international donors, regarding the **evolutionary path of democracy promotion** and the **conditions that affect civil society's capacities to function as a counterbalance to state power over time**.

❑ Moving forward, **citizen demands and pressures will play increasingly important roles for the success of local governance reforms in Indonesia**. These governance reforms will **move away from the 'free-market politics' of the managerial democracy and administrative decentralization** – **towards <u>a participatory democracy</u> that <u>involves the disenfranchised</u> and <u>empowers them to be part of the collective decision-making process</u>**.