

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Supporting the Implementation of the Bone Regency Government's Work Program

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to critically analyze the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in supporting the implementation of the Bone Regency Government's work programs. The study focuses on two main issues: the positive contribution of NGOs in strengthening regional development through partnerships with the government, and the identification of inhibiting factors resulting from the misalignment of interests between the two actors. The research method used is a qualitative case study strategy, through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and official document review. The results show that NGOs in Bone Regency have a dual role: on the one hand, strengthening development governance through community participation, community empowerment, and social advocacy; but on the other hand, presenting potential obstacles in the form of weak accountability, limited organizational capacity, and friction with the government due to differences in program orientation. The government-NGO relationship in Bone is thus ambivalent, namely collaborative and confrontational. This study emphasizes that the role of NGOs cannot be viewed merely as passive partners, but rather as actors with significant social, political, and economic bargaining power. These findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of collaborative governance at the local level, as well as practical recommendations for local governments and NGOs in building more adaptive, transparent, and sustainable partnerships.

Keywords: NGO, local government, collaborative governance, Bone Regency, governance, development

INTRODUCTION

The presence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Bone Regency is often viewed as important partners in supporting regional development. Various programs implemented by NGOs, such as farmer empowerment, fisherman training, environmental advocacy, and public health services, are considered capable of complementing the limited capacity of local governments (Triadi, 2025). In this context, NGOs act as catalysts, encouraging community participation and linking local needs with the government's development agenda (Rustanto, Nurrahmah, & Aima, 2024). Such partnerships require *integrative leadership*, namely shared trust, regular communication, and consensus in decision-making to promote program effectiveness.

However, this role doesn't always align with the interests of local governments. Some NGOs operate with agendas that emphasize advocacy rather than program implementation, sometimes creating tensions with the government. Harsh criticism of local government policies deemed unpro-people, for example, is often perceived by the government as resistance that actually hinders the program's implementation. (Hummel & Kusumasari, 2024). This lack of synchronicity in orientation is what makes the relationship between the Bone Regency government and NGOs a tug-of-war between partnership and conflict.

Furthermore, accountability issues are a major problem inherent in many NGOs in Bone. Limited transparency in fund management, unclear performance reports, and dependence on external donors often raise questions about the extent to which NGOs truly serve the public interest (Yunus et al., 2024). Under certain conditions, the existence of NGOs can even potentially lead to social fragmentation, and NGOs can even become confrontational with the government, both when development programs do not align with community needs and when they feel they are not receiving equal benefits or access from implemented policies (Campos & Reich, 2019).

Thus, the role of NGOs in Bone Regency can be understood as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, NGOs strengthen government programs by providing resources, innovation, and community-based approaches. On the other hand, NGOs can actually slow or even hinder the effective implementation of government programs. This situation makes a critical study of the relationship between the local government and NGOs in Bone Regency important (Asdar et al., 2025) . The relationship between NGOs and the Bone Regency government presents an interesting dilemma to examine. On the one hand, NGOs are positioned as partners capable of strengthening the capacity of the local government through community empowerment programs, social advocacy, and community-based development. However, on the other hand, there is criticism that NGOs often pursue agendas that are not fully aligned with the local government's development priorities, and in some cases, even creating political and social tensions.

The fundamental question that then arises is whether NGOs in Bone Regency truly support the implementation of government work programs, or actually hinder it through practices that are not in sync with the regional development agenda. Starting from this problem, this study aims to critically analyze the role of NGOs in supporting the implementation of the Bone Regency Government's work program.

The analysis aims to understand two main issues: first, the positive contribution of NGOs to strengthening regional development through collaboration with the government; and second, identifying factors that could potentially hinder program effectiveness due to misaligned interests between NGOs and the government (Ismoyo et al., 2024). With these goals, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the position of NGOs in the regional development landscape, not merely as passive partners but as actors with political, social, and economic bargaining power.

This study has high academic and practical relevance. Academically, it contributes to the literature on collaborative governance at the local level by highlighting the

ambivalent relationship between local governments and NGOs in the development context. Such research remains relatively limited, particularly in agrarian regions like Bone Regency. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for local governments in formulating more adaptive partnership strategies with NGOs, maximizing their support while minimizing potential obstacles. For NGOs themselves, this study can serve as a critical reflection to improve accountability, transparency, and program relevance to community needs.

Research methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in supporting the work programs of the Bone Regency Government. According to Yin (2018), qualitative case studies allow researchers to explore phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context cannot be clearly separated (Triadi, 2019). Primary data was collected through *in-depth interviews* with various key informants, including local NGO leaders, Bone district government officials, and program beneficiary communities.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide informants with the freedom to explain their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding NGO-government collaboration. In addition to interviews, primary data was also obtained through participant observation at several NGO activities and government-community coordination forums. This observation aimed to capture the dynamics of interactions that cannot always be revealed through interviews (Triadi & Ismoyo, 2022). Secondary data was obtained from official documents, such as local government annual reports, NGO program documents, and publications from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). This data was used to strengthen triangulation and provide a quantitative overview that complements the qualitative narrative.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, following the steps suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006): repeated reading of the data, identifying codes, grouping codes into themes, and interpreting the findings according to the theoretical framework of *collaborative governance* and *civil society*. To ensure the credibility of the results, the researchers applied source triangulation (interviews, observations, documents) and method triangulation (interviews and observations). With this approach, the research is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive picture of the contributions and obstacles of NGOs in supporting the work programs of the Bone Regency Government, as well as provide theoretical contributions to the study of collaborative governance at the local level.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Bone Regency

The role of NGOs in Bone Regency is clearly visible in supporting the regional development planning process. Their presence in deliberation forums, both at the village and district levels, demonstrates a serious effort to bridge community needs with government agendas. One NGO leader, LSM LANKORAS- HAM, emphasized: *"We want to ensure that government programs are not just born from bureaucratic institutions, but are truly felt by the community on the ground."*

From a *collaborative governance perspective* (Ansell & Gash, 2008), this role marks a shift from a top-down development model to a participatory one. NGOs act as mediators, representing public aspirations so that development planning in Bone is more contextualized to the region's socio-economic conditions. This is crucial because Bone still faces issues of structural poverty, unemployment, and limited access to basic services. At the long-term planning level, NGOs actively promote a vision of corruption-free and sustainable development. An interview with an NGO leader in Bone revealed: "A good program is one that can be felt by our children and grandchildren, not just one that is completed within a single government period." This perspective demonstrates the strategic role of NGOs in ensuring the continuity of development across generations.

Medium-term programs also serve as an avenue for NGO contributions. They highlight the community's need for employment, particularly for university graduates. This contribution is relevant to the developmental state theory, where development is not solely managed by the government but also by non-state actors who help address structural economic issues (Triadi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, short-term NGO programs are typically responsive, such as advocating for the provision of infrastructure in villages, mentoring farmers, or supporting non-formal education services. This type of support adds value to the government by accelerating the achievement of development targets often hampered by bureaucratic constraints.

However, this NGO support doesn't simply facilitate development. They also exert moral pressure on the government to be more transparent. An NGO leader (the LA Tenritatta NGO) emphasized: *"We support, but we support critically. If the government is going in the wrong direction, our job is to warn them."* This critical support strengthens accountability while preventing abuse of power. When linked to the theory of good governance (UNDP, 1997), the role of NGOs in Bone meets the indicators of participation and accountability. By acting as critical partners, NGOs help local governments address weaknesses in the planning process. At the same time, they ensure that the aspirations of marginalized groups are not marginalized.

However, this support also faces limitations. Not all NGOs have the same technical capacity. Some are still weak in data collection, research, and administrative management. This reduces the effectiveness of their role as planning partners. This demonstrates the gap between NGO ideals and the reality on the ground. Despite limitations, the presence of NGOs continues to strengthen the legitimacy of Bone government policies. Programs involving NGOs tend to be more accepted by the public, as they feel they were involved in policy formulation. This aligns with legitimacy building theory, which argues that public participation strengthens public acceptance of policies.

Positive Contribution of NGOs in Strengthening Governance

The positive contribution of NGOs extends beyond the planning stage to their organizational and implementation functions. The Head of the Bone Regency National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) explained: "*Coordination with NGOs is crucial for a unified vision. We want them to work in tandem, not independently.*" This demonstrates the government's formal recognition of NGOs' contributions to strengthening governance structures. From a network governance perspective (Rhodes, 1997), NGOs serve as network nodes connecting the government, communities, and the private sector. The flexibility of NGO organizations makes them more adaptable than rigid bureaucracies. In Bone, this is evident in the role of NGOs in the agricultural sector, where they facilitate farmer groups' access to training and new technologies.

Beyond the agricultural sector, NGOs are also active in education and health issues. They run non-formal learning classes for out-of-school children and facilitate community-based health services. These contributions complement the government's limited reach in hard-to-reach rural areas. An interview with the Head of the Bone NGO Alliance reinforces this: "*We don't want to replace the government, but we try to fill the gaps that the government can't reach.*" This statement demonstrates the position of NGOs as complementary actors that fill gaps in the provision of public services.

In their actuating function, NGOs provide strategic input to the government. They are often invited to provide recommendations in the development of regional policies. One NGO leader stated: "Our first step is to provide professional advice so that the government doesn't make the wrong decisions." This demonstrates their role as policy advisors. This positive contribution aligns with Edwards' (2014) argument that NGOs have a dual function: as service providers and as advocates for the community. In Bone, these functions run parallel—they assist in program implementation while simultaneously advocating for citizens' rights.

However, these contributions are not always easy to implement. NGOs often face limited funding and human resources. Many of their programs rely on external donors, making sustainability a challenge. According to resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), dependence on external funding sources makes NGOs vulnerable to changes in donor policies. Nevertheless, NGOs remain important catalysts in promoting local democratization. By directly engaging communities, they strengthen their capacity to participate in development.

This is consistent with the idea of empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000) which emphasizes the importance of empowerment as the key to social change. In addition to empowerment, NGOs also strengthen social cohesion. Their community-based programs, such as community dialogues and social gatherings, strengthen relationships between residents and prevent horizontal conflict. This is a contribution that is rarely highlighted but is crucial for stable regional development.

Obstacles and Potential for Asynchrony

Despite their support and positive contributions, the role of NGOs in Bone is not without obstacles and potential for inconsistency. One major obstacle is the negative

image of some NGOs. Many bureaucrats view NGOs as parties more concerned with profit-seeking than advancing the public interest. The head of the Bone NGO Alliance himself acknowledged this: "*There are some NGOs that no longer focus on community issues, but rather on narrow interests. This has tarnished our image.*" This statement demonstrates a credibility crisis among NGOs. Theoretically, this aligns with Salamon's (1994) critique of the NGO dilemma, namely the dilemma of being a government partner or a critical opposition. NGOs that are too close to the government lose their independence, while NGOs that are too critical are often seen as obstacles to development (Ayub, 2020). Another obstacle is differences in program orientation. NGOs emphasizing environmental advocacy or minority rights often align with government development priorities focused on infrastructure. This lack of synchronization creates friction in program implementation.

In their oversight (controlling) function, NGOs are often perceived as confrontational. They frequently report allegations of corruption, budget irregularities, and even maladministration. A Head of Public Relations for the Bone Regional Government said: "*We appreciate criticism, but often their approach is too harsh, giving the impression that all government policies are wrong.*" This role is actually in line with the watchdog function of civil society (Diamond, 1999), which is to oversee the running of government. However, without a clear communication mechanism, this function actually creates political tension.

On the other hand, NGOs also face internal obstacles in the form of weak organizational capacity. Not all NGOs have robust accountability and management systems. Some even lack transparent financial reporting, raising public suspicion. These limitations have led some people to doubt the seriousness of NGOs. They believe they only appear when a project is underway and then disappear when funding runs out. This criticism weakens NGOs' position as representatives of civil society. If not addressed, these obstacles could undermine development synergy in Bone. Rather than being strategic partners, NGOs could become obstacles due to their low credibility and lack of coordination with the government.

Conclusion

Research on the role of NGOs in supporting the Bone Regency Government's work programs shows that the relationship between these two actors is ambivalent: both collaborative and confrontational. From a collaborative perspective, NGOs play a crucial role in the regional development planning process through participatory mechanisms involving various stakeholders. The presence of NGOs helps bridge the aspirations of grassroots communities with local government policies, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of public policies. In addition, NGOs also contribute positively to strengthening development governance, particularly in the aspects of organizing and implementing programs.

Through community empowerment activities, public dialogue, and advocacy on strategic issues, NGOs serve as catalysts that enrich *collaborative governance practices*

at the local level. This aligns with *civil society strengthening theory*, which emphasizes the role of NGOs in creating more participatory, transparent, and responsive governance. However, this study also found that the presence of NGOs does not always support government programs. Obstacles arise in the form of weak accountability of some NGOs, differences in interest orientation, and the potential for image distortion due to opportunistic behavior. At this point, the government-NGO relationship in Bone demonstrates what is called *the NGO dilemma*, namely the tug-of-war between the functions of collaboration and control. The most obvious tension arises at the monitoring (*controlling*) stage, when NGOs are critical of the implementation of public policies, including issues related to the regional budget (APBD), recruitment of civil servants, and indications of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN).

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