

The Role of Strategic Alliances between NGOs and the Local Media in making Health Services responsive to the Poor in Makassar City, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia

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1. Background

Decentralization has become one of the key features of Indonesia's democratization process since 1999. Indonesia has shifted more authority and resources from central government to local government, especially to the district and municipality levels. As a consequence, subnational government was managing half of total public investment by 2003 (World Bank 2007: xviii). The Second Revision of the Law of Local Government of 2008 gives districts and municipalities greater authority in planning and managing the local development process. They are also responsible for delivering basic services, such as education, health, social affairs and public infrastructure to citizens.

This policy should bring the government closer to the people and make it more responsive and accountable to citizens' demands. However, most of local government still struggles to exercise its new role and authority effectively. USAID (2006), for example, has found that improvements in basic services varied greatly between individual districts and municipalities in Indonesia. In the case of the health sector, Rokx et al. (2009: 105) found that only around 20 per cent of districts had promoted significant reform in its financing mechanisms that could enhance citizens' access to services. It is obvious that, on the one hand, many district governments lack the capacity to deliver services effectively (Rokx et al. 2009: 15) while, at the same time, local planning and budgeting processes are not responsive enough to citizens' needs (Bahagijo and Triwibowo 2008: 4).

Despite these problems, a significant number of local governments perform well (Eko 2008: 154). The emergence of responsive local leaders is oftenly cited as a major contributory factor to districts being able to deliver service improvements (USAID 2006; 68). However, continual pressure from local civil society, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the local mass media, for improvements in basic service delivery are also important. (Eko 2008: 148). As in other developing country experiences, civil society activism provides much needed social capital to consolidate democracy and trigger policy reform (Triwibowo, Mutasya and Muhajir 2010).

The alliance between NGOs and the local mass media to promote responsive health care services in Makassar municipality, South Sulawesi province, is one example of effective partnerships among civil society entities. This paper describes the accountability mechanisms that they succeeded in promoting in the municipality, and analyses their impact and the factors that contributed to their effectiveness. It also explores the prospects for the sustainability of the mechanisms.

2. The role of the mass media in promoting accountability

Omoera (2010: 33) defines the mass media as an organ that informs the public about the activities of the various branches of the state (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary) and other public affairs that serve the public interest. As is noted by Swestin (2008: 108), the

mass media has an obligation to ensure that citizens gain the necessary information to empower them to take a stand on particular issues that represent their interests. The media can take electronic (radio and television) or printed (newspaper, magazine, newsletter, bulletin, tabloid) form, and can have nationwide as well as local coverage.

The mass media has a well-known role in promoting accountability in the policymaking process (Ocitti 1999). Many comparative studies have found a strong correlation between the degree of media freedom and the level of corruption (Dharmasaputra 2009). It is obvious that a higher degree of media freedom will reduce the incidence of corruption and the misuse of public resources.

The media's ability to support stronger state capabilities, state accountability and state responsiveness will determine the significance of its role (DFID 2008). The mass media can play an effective role in improving state capacity and in increasing public acceptance of its role by supplying citizens with adequate information to enhance their understanding of government policy and giving them space for policy debate. On the other hand, the media exercises its watchdog role by investigating and interrogating government policy in the name of the public interest to ensure accountability, as well as to maintain state responsiveness by bringing the problems in society to government attention and pressuring for a response.

Based on these attributes, the mass media can serve various roles in promoting accountability (Omoera 2010). The experience of Nigeria shows that the mass media can improve the quality of governance by spreading useful information to citizens (information role), leading public opinion and shaping the policymaking agenda (leadership role), criticizing government policy (watchdog role) and influencing the direction of political change by providing civic/political education to the public (electioneering role). In many developing countries, the mass media is able to exercise its watchdog role effectively despite constant pressure from the state. In the Philippines, for example, the Philippines Centre for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) led the investigation of Joseph Estrada's corruption that in the end toppled him from the presidency (MacDonell and Pesic 2009: 697).

In order to play its role successfully, the mass media often develops partnerships and alliances with other actors that have similar functions or interests. In Uganda, the media cooperated closely with parliament to expose the corruption of high-level officials in the government (Smith 2009). The media also has a long history of alliances with NGOs to promote accountability in the policymaking process. According to Mietzner and Aspinall (2010: 12), the public see NGOs as catalysts for democratization. NGOs serve this function by acting as pressure groups that demand better service delivery, improvements in policy and budget transparency, as well as wider access for public participation.

In Indonesia, this alliance between the mass media and NGOs is also common at the local level. The media liberalization policy which began after 1999 stimulated a rapid growth of the local mass media and brought a replication of this partnership to the subnational level. In Sumedang district, local NGOs used the media to push health care service reform into public discourse and disseminate their proposals for policy reform (Nurman and Martiani 2008: 70). Another example is Garut district, where Garut Governance Watch (G2W) cooperated

simultaneously with five local newspapers to expose rampantly corrupt practices in local government, and brought the case to the court of justice (Widoyoko 2009).

Nevertheless, the media needs an enabling environment to play its role effectively. It also needs adequate capacity to perform its information and leadership roles, as well as the electioneering and watchdog functions. There should also be a mechanism to hold the media accountable to the public and uphold ethical and professional standards. The establishment of an independent media regulator and free press associations are important to ensure media accountability. Furthermore, media independence will only be guaranteed if media organizations are financially sustainable, free from owner and state intervention, operate in a competitive environment, and are accessible to all segments of society.

3. Makassar: A strategic alliance between NGOs and the local media

Makassar is the capital of South Sulawesi province and, at 175.7 square kilometres in area and with around 1.4 million inhabitants, probably the largest city in Eastern Indonesia. Since its early days of modern development in the mid-1960s, Makassar directed its development to establish the city as a centre of growth, business, trade and investment in the region (Triwibowo 2008: 53). The policy remains intact in the decentralization era. In 2009 the city won 'Autonomy Awards' granted by the Fajar Institute for Pro-Otonomi (FIPO), an independent body established by a local media group, for its achievement in promoting pro-investment policies and the development of economic infrastructure at the local level (Kadir et al. 2009).

On the down side, economic growth has attracted a rapid inflow of migrants, triggering income inequality and a high incidence of poverty. As a consequence, the city government has acknowledged poverty as a priority problem in its local development policy since the late 1960s (Triwibowo 2008: 53). However, until the early 2000s the government chose two main approaches to resolving the problem:

- A focus on top-down technocratic approaches to poverty reduction that neglected citizen participation and made citizens a policy implementation tool; and
- Regarding poverty reduction as a direct consequence of sustained economic growth so that it needed no specific policy intervention.

This indirect approach to poverty reduction provided the municipal government with few incentives to initiate policy reform and innovation in basic service delivery, including in health care services, until 2003.

After decentralization, the national government transferred responsibility for providing health care services to district and municipal governments (Rokx et al. 2009: 15). Municipal governments also have more responsibility for allocating resources and authority to implement locally designed policies. However, in the early period of the process, the city government decided to maintain its supply-side intervention policy. This policy was centred

on increasing the number of physical facilities, such as community health centres (*pusat kesehatan masyarakat*, puskesmas) and medical workers, as well as the continuation of the existing programme designed by the central government (Ma'mur and Kusuma in Triwibowo 2008: 57). Demand-side interventions were limited to counselling and the promotion of the government programme within the health sector.

The supply-side intervention had many weaknesses (Triwibowo 2008: 57). It assumed that if services and facilities were adequate and available, and citizens had sufficient knowledge about the importance of health care, they would automatically be willing and able to access those facilities. This kind of policy ignored various factors that can hamper citizens' access, especially among the poor, to such health care facilities. The poor often face income constraints on paying fees to use services and facilities, since the city government has often treated health care facilities as local economic enterprises and a source of revenue. The policy was not responsive to the poor since it restricted their access to public health care facilities and made the poor depend more on self-healing and cheaper, traditional medication.

The local mass media was aware of this situation. Since the early 1990s, a local radio station had begun to develop news programmes that included information about problems in services delivery in their broadcasts.¹ Mercurius TOP FM, the biggest radio station in Makassar, led the initiative. It was part of a radio journalism movement to reduce the domination of the news programme broadcast by Republic of Indonesia Radio (Radio Republik Indonesia, RRI), a state-led radio station in Makassar. It started with repetitive short information during the day about things that happened around the city, but grew into a longer news programme with interviews and comment from various, both state and non-state, sources on specific topics, including local health care services.

The initiative was followed by *Tribun Timur*, a leading local newspaper in Makassar, which in 1994 allocated a specific page in the newspaper to news about service delivery in the city.² The Kompas Group, a national media group that owns a majority share of the newspaper, believed that people reading the newspaper were looking for not just the latest news but also information that could help them meet their needs. The newspaper soon allocated more pages to accommodate citizens' complaints and questions regarding various aspects of basic service delivery as well as replies from relevant local government agencies. This initiative received a very positive response from readers, became a hallmark of *Tribun Timur* and was replicated by other local newspapers.

As the mass media began to play a more active information role on basic service delivery problems, local NGOs also started to make similar issues their priority. An internal consolidation process among local NGOs in the late 1980s, which led to the establishment of a joint communication and consultation forum for NGOs in Makassar, had triggered this shift.³ The Communication and Information Forum for Civil Society Organizations (Forum Informasi dan Komunikasi Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat, FIK LSM) was established in 1990 with the aim of strengthening the effectiveness of advocacy programmes and networks among NGOs in Makassar and other areas in South Sulawesi province.

The forum facilitates capacity building for NGOs and fosters partnerships between NGOs and other stakeholders in the region. The forum changed its name to the Communication and Information Forum for Non Government Organizations (Forum Informasi dan Komunikasi Organisasi Non Pemerintah, FIK ORNOP) in 2000. It then started to prioritize several programmes in its activities, especially promoting local policy reform in basic service delivery and social protection, media and public campaigns for improvements in human rights, participatory development and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes.

The establishment of FIK ORNOP marked the beginning of a strategic alliance between local NGOs and the mass media in Makassar municipality to encourage more accountable policy practices in basic service delivery, especially in health care services. The media inserted comments from NGOs to give more credibility to their news coverage, asked NGOs to write opinion pieces for their newspapers, and asked them to join panel discussions on talk shows to accompany spokespeople from local government.⁴ NGOs became reliable information sources for the media.

At the same time, NGOs invited the media to cover the implementation of their programme, used it to launch their statements or publicize their opinions on specific topics and basic service delivery problems more widely to the public, and designed a capacity-building programme targeted specifically at journalists in the local mass media. On the one hand, the media needed NGOs as sources of information and capacity building and, on the other hand, NGOs needed the media's information provider role to make the public aware of their point of view. Table 1 shows the various forms of alliance between NGOs and the mass media in Makassar.

Table 1. Description of various forms of alliance between NGOs and the mass media

	Activities	The role of NGOs
Mass media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ News coverage ▪ Investigative reports ▪ Interviews and radio talk shows ▪ A page for citizens' complaints and dialogue with the city government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A source for media coverage and news ▪ Opinion pieces in newspapers ▪ Panel members on media talk shows
NGOs	Activities	The role of the media
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public campaigns ▪ Policy advocacy ▪ Research ▪ Capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminate press release from NGOs ▪ Put coverage of NGOs' activities and programmes in the news ▪ Participate in the capacity building programme designed by NGOs

Source: Interviews with various sources

The effectiveness of this alliance was confirmed in 2003 when it successfully pushed for the first major health care service reform in Makassar. On the eve of a possible first direct local election for Makassar's mayor,⁵ the alliance orchestrated intensive media coverage of the problems of health care in the city (Triwibowo 2008: 58–59). The newspapers and radio

stations continually exposed the grievances of the poor about their limited access to health care facilities and their inability to afford the expensive health care fees in those facilities. The media also reported cases of deaths among the poor linked to this situation.

The media coverage prompted wide public discussion about the issue and criticism of the city government about the way it handled the problem began to increase. The mayor, H.B. Amiruddin Maula, tried to suppress these criticisms by organizing several venues for the provision of free health services to the poor. However, the public saw this response as inadequate and demanded a more comprehensive solution to the problem. Facing mounting public pressure, and seeing a political opportunity to use the issue for his re-election if he accommodated public demands, the mayor issued Decree no. 704/Kep/445/2003 in November 2003 to waive service fees at major health care facilities in Makassar. Tiro (Triwibowo 2008: 58) describes the situation as follows:

[the] triggering factor for the policy emerged from people's complaints, especially the poor, regarding expensive health services, and the depiction of cases of death in the mass media caused by the delayed health treatments, and suggestions from NGOs and groups in society when free health services were provided in Makassar's Grand Mosque.

The Mayor's decree stated that from 1 November 2003, all medical treatment, especially basic health services, provided in puskesmas and their sub-centres (*puskesmas pembantu*, *pustu*) would be free for all citizens of Makassar. The decree aimed to give all registered inhabitants of Makassar, especially the poor, equal access to health care services without being hampered by their income status. The decree included all kinds of basic health care services, such as medical treatment, routine check-ups (pre-natal, immunization and general laboratory services), patient registration, emergency room services, mother and childcare, as well as teeth and mouth check-ups (Triwibowo 2008: 56). However, it excluded several services, such as family planning, and diabetes and blood type checks.

The decision was a major breakthrough in health care policy in Makassar for three reasons. First, it shifted the approach from supply-side interventions to demand-side interventions that are more responsive to the needs of citizens as service users. The waiver of service fees enabled the poor to access health care services in puskesmas and *pustu*. Box 1 describes the significance of puskesmas and *pustu* in health care services at the local level. Second, it promoted universalism in health care and service delivery by providing equal access for all registered citizens regardless of their income and social status. It will strengthen social solidarity among citizens and erase the social stigma of the poor. Previously, the poor had to obtain reference letters from the village government to certify their poverty in order to obtain a fee waiver in the puskesmas. Third, it marked the beginning of a locally driven health care policy in Makassar, since the central government played no part in its issuance.

It also represented a significant win for civil society, especially the local media and NGOs. The success raised their credibility as agents of change. On the one hand, it proved that the local media in Makassar was capable of carrying out not only its information and watchdog role, but also its leadership role, by proposing an agenda for policy reform, and its

electioneering, role by shaping the political process at the local level. On the other hand, it showed that the local NGOs could represent the voice of the citizens and cooperate well with other actors in civil society to articulate their messages coherently to the city government.

Box 1. The significance of puskesmas and pustu

Puskesmas and pustu have been the main service providers of the government's basic health services and primary care programme since the 1970s (Rokx et al. 2009: 15). They are located and operate at the sub-district (*kecamatan*) and village (*kelurahan/desa*) levels in order to lengthen the outreach of services to citizens. By 2006, the government had built around 8000 puskesmas each of which has the capacity to serve 23,000 people within an area of 24 square kilometres (Ministry of Health 2009: 16). The government also established 22,200 pustu across Indonesia.

Puskesmas were encouraged to adopt more self-financing principles after decentralization (Rokx et al. 2009: 16). This made the collection of user fees important in order to cover their operating costs. Furthermore, local government often treats health care facilities as local economic enterprises that must contribute to local budget revenues. Research by Kristiansen and Santoso (2009: 16) found that 75 per cent of public hospital and puskesmas revenue went into the local government purse.

Source: Rokx, Claudia, et al. *Health Financing in Indonesia: A Reform Road Map* Jakarta: The World Bank, 2009

As a result, the municipal government pays more attention to their potential power as pressure groups. Although Mayor Maula was not re-elected, the new mayor, Ilham Arief Sirajuddin, maintained the policy. He improved its implementation and strengthened its legal basis by the issuance of Local Regulation no. 7/2009 on Health Care Services in Makassar to ensure policy continuity. He also integrated the policy into the medium term local development plan document for 2005–2010 (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah, RPJMD*).

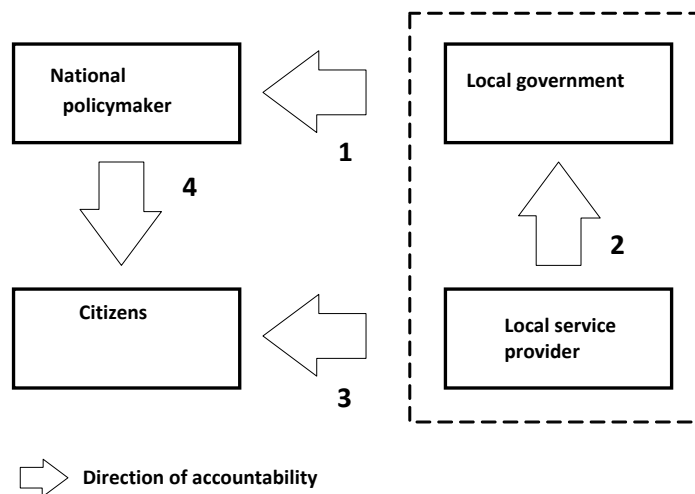
During his first term in office, he made sure that the city government allocated adequate resources from the local annual budget to support the policy (Triwibowo 2008: 65). The money was reallocated from the budget for local health agencies (*dinas kesehatan*), especially under the spending items 'general medicine and health services' and 'operational costs and maintenance' for puskesmas. In the two years after the issuance of the decree, the amount allocated grew from IDR 4.15 billion in 2007 to IDR 6 billion in 2008. The number of citizens' visits to the puskesmas increased by 21.6 per cent from 2005 to 2006 (Triwibowo 2008: 66).

The new mayor also asked the city government to be more open and responsive when working with the media.⁶ He established a special unit in the municipal government and set

up a telephone hotline to respond to citizens' complaints and queries across the range of public services in Makassar. Patarai (2007: 92) argues that Ilham Arief Sirajuddin has the will to learn about and use the mass media as an information source, and as a partner in changing inappropriate public policies. Furthermore, he has used the reform of health care services to initiate similar reforms in basic education services, public administration, legal aid and assistance, and burial services for all citizens.

The case of health care reform shows that alliances between NGOs and the local mass media could offer citizens an alternative accountability mechanism to make the policies of the city government more responsive to their needs. The World Bank notes that accountability in basic service delivery at the local level is comprised of four multi-level components (USAID 2006: 69). The first level of accountability is between central government, which decentralizes authority, sets the standard and provides policy guidance, and the local government, which exercises the authority and implements the policy. The second level of accountability is between the local government, which oversees and coordinates service delivery at the local level, and local service providers, which deliver the service directly to the citizens. The third level of accountability is between the local system of service delivery (local government and local service providers) and the citizens who need the services. The last level of accountability is from national government to the citizen. Figure 2 illustrates the accountability system.

Figure 2. Accountability mechanism of service delivery at the local level



Source: USAID (2006)

The alliance in Makassar has established an alternative, third level of accountability between the citizens and the municipal government. It provides citizens with an avenue to express their feedback on the quality of service they receive, as well as any existing expectation gaps, and offers an instrument for the citizen to directly monitor and evaluate the performance of local government and local service providers. The local (district level) parliament is the key actor responsible for establishing this level of accountability in formal local planning and budgeting processes. However, this institution is not equipped with adequate capacity to carry out this function (Sujito 2008).

In an interview, Jumadi Mappanganro, the editor of the *Tribun Timur* newspaper, argued that the mass media can deliver the citizen's voice to the municipal government faster, louder and more effectively than existing feedback mechanisms put in place by the parliament:

the citizens prefer to use the mass media because it is more practical. They do not have to make an appointment first and wait for long time to talk about their problem. They just give us a call, send us a text message, or write on our Facebook wall to make their voice heard. The media can also give them a quick solution because we directly connect them with agencies that are relevant to answering their queries or complaints. The media is popular because it is accessible and reliable.⁷

Every day, the newspaper receives around 300 messages, emails or telephone calls from citizens. After a process of discussion, verification and editing inside the editorial board, the paper usually puts around 100 complaints and queries on its daily Public Service page.

Moreover, Jumadi Mappanganro believes that this mechanism could help the local parliament exercise its oversight function of basic service delivery in a better way. In his opinion, local parliamentarians often use the news from the media as an entry point to call joint consultation meetings with the city government, conduct ad hoc monitoring visits to get a firmer grip on a problem, or have direct dialogue with citizens. They also frequently cite reports in the newspapers in their debates and their discussions with the government. Some also use the media to convey their opinions to the public when dissatisfied with ongoing discussions inside parliament.

4. Key factors influencing effective accountability mechanisms

Several factors have contributed to the successful efforts of the mass media-NGO alliance to establish alternative accountability mechanisms. Some of the factors were influenced by national, macro-level processes, such as the introduction of a big-bang decentralization, a positive enabling environment for freedom of the press and more competitive local politics, which were brought about by the issuance of new laws by the central government. Both external and internal factors have worked together for the improvement of health care services in Makassar municipality.

4.1. The introduction of big-bang decentralization

Decentralization and national policies that devolve more authority and fiscal resources to district governments have contributed to the promotion of transparency and good governance at the local level. After the economic crisis of 1997–1998, which led to the downfall of the authoritarian New Order regime, the Indonesian Government took the bold step of introducing a massive administrative, financial and political decentralization (Hopkins Leisher and Nachuk 2006: 4). Under Law no. 22/1999 on Local Government and Law no. 25/1999 on Fiscal Equalization between National and Local Governments, the government

transferred power and decision-making authority mainly to district and municipality governments. The national government retained only six areas of exclusive responsibility: foreign affairs, defence, (internal) security, justice, monetary and fiscal affairs, and religious affairs (Sudarmo and Sudjana 2009: 6). In short, Indonesia was transformed from a highly centralized state into one of the most decentralized in the world just one year after the reintroduction of democracy. Table 2 describes the subnational governments' areas of control

Table 2. Subnational governments' areas of control

Subnational units of government	Number of subnational units of government	Average ratio of span of control
Provinces	33	33 provinces: 1 national government
Districts/municipalities	489	14.8 districts: 1 province
Sub-districts	6,357	13 sub-districts: 1 district
Villages	75,411	11.9 villages: 1 sub-district

Source: Sudarmo and Sudjana (2009)

Many believe that political factors strongly influenced the design of the decentralization in Indonesia (Buehler 2010, White and Smoke 2003). The sudden collapse of the New Order administration reinvigorated long-standing demands from regional governments for more political power and a fairer distribution of the benefits derived from the country's rich resources (Buehler 2010: 268). The national government believed that transferring some power to the regions would meet their mounting demands and thereby prevent the dissatisfaction from becoming a wider secessionist movement that could threaten national unity. Districts and municipalities were safer options than provinces. According to White and Smoke (2003: 4), central political elites sought to prevent the emergence of regional provincial rivals by pushing authority and resources down to less powerful district and municipality governments.

However, this decision has empowered the districts and municipalities. The new powers over finance and administration provide the district government with tools and resources to promote local policy reform. After decentralization, districts became the recipients of significant central government transfers, which they were able to allocate to policies that they saw as important for their citizens (Leisher and Nachuk 2006: 4). Furthermore, the introduction of subnational direct elections has pushed the district government to be more accountable, since 'bad policies' lead to a loss of popular support. As Leisher and Naschuk (2006: 4) observe, decentralization provided incentives for many district governments to promote increased transparency and wider public participation in the local policymaking process.

Several revisions of the decentralization policy have strengthened the drive for such reforms. In the First Revision of the Law of Local Government 2004 (Law no. 32/2004), the transfer of authority was linked directly with an obligation to improve public service delivery (USAID 2006: 62). Directions were also given for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services as well as greater participation by the public in policymaking, and the planning, monitoring and management of service delivery. Through this law and its subsequent regulations, the national government has encouraged local government to provide the public with high quality services through transparent delivery mechanisms (USAID 2006: 62).

Nonetheless, Indonesia's decentralization is far from perfect in practice. Much empirical evidence shows that not all district and municipal governments have seized the opportunity to become more accountable and transparent. USAID (2006: 63) found in 1996 that improvements in services delivery among more than 400 districts and municipalities were minimal, with only isolated cases of local innovation. It is believed that, overall, performance levels in public service delivery remain relatively low, and that the few successful cases are not a reflection of broader trends (von Luebke 2010: 281).

The current recentralization effort, as set out in the Second Revision of the Law of Local Government 2008, reflects a national government initiative to reverse this trend. In Government Regulation no. 19/2010 on the Authority and Responsibility of the Governor as the Representative of National Government at the Province Level, the provincial government is given more responsibility for coordinating and supervising the development process at the local level. As the representative of the national government, the provincial government has the authority to evaluate and review the performance of the district and municipal governments. It is expected that the provincial government will ensure that the district and municipal government can cope well with the decentralization framework.

4.2. A positive enabling environment for press freedom

The liberalization of the press and the mass media that followed the democratization process in 1998 was the key to the emergence of the positive enabling environment. Previously, during the New Order authoritarian regime, the central government controlled the press through the Ministry of Information. Based on Press Law no. 11/1966, the government had the power to censor the news in the mass media, revoke the licence of any media outlet that discredited the government, and maintain a strong grip on the journalists' association and organizations. Under the regime's repressive policies against the freedom of the press, the mass media was left with little option but to back government policy.

At the beginning of the democracy process, parliament issued Press Law no. 40/1999, which endorsed the freedom of the press and respected the independence of the media. The law allows journalists to form new associations, establishes an independent regulator to monitor the standard of news coverage in the media, and promotes court settlements to replace one-sided licence retractions in cases of conflict. The law minimizes state intervention in the mass media.

This trend was conducive to enabling the mass media to play its information role more effectively. The new freedom enables the media to play a role that was impossible in the New Order era. The press can oppose or debate government policy and even act as a watchdog to monitor policy implementation. The new law obliges the press to respect the people's right to know, strengthen democratic values, encourage the supremacy of the law and human rights, and respect pluralism.

At the same time, the new law triggered a media liberalization process (Nainggolan 2008). In 1997, there were only 289 printed daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, tabloids and bulletins in Indonesia. However, by 1999 the new law had boosted this number to 1687, before it declined to 829 by 2005. The same trend was also apparent in the electronic media, such as television and radio stations. Table 3 shows the growth of the media after the issuance of the new law.

Table 3. The growth of the mass media in Indonesia after democracy

	1997	1999	2005
Printed media	289	1687	829
Television stations	6	11	65
Radio stations	741	1111	2000

Source: Nainggolan (2008)

This liberalization has led to stronger competition, not only at the national level but also locally. In Makassar, the number of printed and electronic media organs has grown enormously in the past decade. Currently, the city has six large local newspapers, four local television stations, and no less than 24 radio stations.⁸ The state-led media, such as Republic of Indonesia Television Station (Televisi Republik Indonesia, TVRI) and RRI, no longer dominate the production of news and information in Makassar. Table 4 lists the major mass media outlets in the Makassar municipality.

Table 4. List of major mass media organizations in Makassar municipality, 2010

Newspapers	TV stations	Radio stations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Tribun Timur</i> ▪ <i>Fajar</i> ▪ <i>Ujung Pandang Express</i> ▪ <i>Berita Kota</i> ▪ <i>SINDO</i> ▪ <i>Koran TEMPO Makassar</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>TVRI</i> ▪ <i>Makassar TV</i> ▪ <i>Fajar TV</i> ▪ <i>SUN TV</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Delta FM</i> ▪ <i>Fajar FM</i> ▪ <i>Madama FM</i> ▪ <i>RRI Programa II Riburane</i> ▪ <i>Sonata FM</i> ▪ <i>Merkurius TOP FM</i> ▪ <i>Suara Celebes FM</i> ▪ <i>Suara Perempuan FM</i> ▪ <i>SMART FM</i>

Source: Interviews with Siswan Tiro, 13 April and 10 May 2010

However, tighter competition is seen as positive, driving media organizations to maintain the quality of their products and improve their performance. Buyung Maksum, a senior journalist from the *Fajar* newspaper, believes that a strong press requires healthy competition:

we always welcome the establishment of new mass media in Makassar. We believe that more media is better for the citizen because it gives them more options to obtain information, and also more alternatives to channel their voice or concerns. Competition among the media will also benefit the public because it will drive the quality up since every media organization will be pushed to keep the credibility of their work intact to win the trust and loyalty of the audience⁹

The high demand for news and information from citizens in Makassar has supported this argument. *Fajar* and *Tribun Timur*, two major newspapers in the city, are read by 15–20 per cent of Makassar's inhabitants.¹⁰ Mercurius TOP FM, the biggest radio station in Makassar, believes that it has 150,000 active listeners, or around 10 per cent of the municipality's inhabitants.¹¹

It is obvious that information and news are important goods for local citizens. The high demand is influenced by the position of Makassar as the growth and business centre of the region. This position has made citizens more sensitive to the need for up-to-date information in order to monitor the dynamics and progress of their surroundings. They also have better socio-economic conditions, with higher purchasing power for information and better literacy in comparison with citizens in other districts in the province. A long history of local media in the city has also led to citizens having a greater interest in news and information.¹² The oldest newspaper, *Pedoman*, was famous among Makassar's citizens in the 1970s, before it went bankrupt in 2007.¹³

Another factor that affects the positive enabling environment for the press is the active role of journalists' associations.¹⁴ There are three associations in Makassar, and they actively facilitate capacity-building activities for their members to enable them to meet professional standards in their work. The associations also interact with each other to develop networks for their members to give them wider access to information.

Technological progress will sustain the enabling environment. As Jumadi Mappanganro and Taufiq Nahwi Rasul explain, progress will enable a process of media convergence between the printed and electronic media. This convergence will make the media more accessible as people will have more options about the form of media they want to use. Easier access to the media will increase the number of media users and create more demand for its services.

The enabling environment has strengthened the credibility of the local mass media in Makassar. In the context of health care and the delivery of other basic services, for example, citizens trust the media to act as a mediator between the people and the service providers to resolve problems (Triwibowo 2008: 59). This has given the local mass media influence beyond the Makassar area, extending to the rural areas of the province such as the Bulukumba and Bone districts. People often regard large newspapers in Makassar such as *Fajar* and *Tribun Timur* as South Sulawesi's newspapers.

4.3. Competitive local politics

The decision by the national government to initiate a series of electoral reforms in 2003 has brought a higher level of competition to the local political system (Buehler 2010: 270–272).

In 2004, the government introduced direct, popular elections for district heads, mayors and governors through Law no. 32/2004 on Regional Government. Previously, under the Law no. 22/1999, these positions were elected by local parliaments, with each party caucus allowed to nominate one candidate (Buehler 2010: 270).

The government enacted the change to reduce the influence of money in politics between the political parties in the parliament and the candidates. Direct elections made the process more transparent, and open to public scrutiny and influence. At the same time, it made the mandate of the local government heads stronger because it is based on a popular vote resulting from direct elections.

The new electoral process will force all candidates for the positions to be responsive to the citizens who can determine the size of their popular vote. It has also made social policy and basic service delivery issues, such as education for all and universal health care, more popular with candidates, since they resonate closely with voters' concerns. The supporters of the new law believe that it will make elected local government heads more accountable to their citizens.

Law no. 12/2008 revised the previous Law on Regional Government and introduced further reform. The new law allows independent candidates to participate in elections to the local executive. It removed the previous condition that obliged candidates to secure the nomination of a political party in order to be eligible to stand (Buehler 2010: 271). This modification is the latest attempt by local government to make the local political system more competitive, inclusive and accountable.

The national government introduced similar reforms to legislative elections. Previously, Law no. 3/1999 on General Elections had introduced a closed party list system that obliged voters to vote for only one party, and not for an individual candidate. This system gave the party the final say on seat allocations between the candidates (Buehler 2010: 272). Responding to pressure from the public to increase transparency and accountability in legislative elections, a later Law on General Elections, no. 12/2003, allowed voters to select a party on the ballot and a candidate on the party list. However, the final selection was still determined more by the candidate's rank on the party list rather than the number of popular votes they received.

Constant pressure from the public led to Law no. 10/2008, which reduced the importance of the party list, and a decision of the Constitutional Court before the 2009 general election totally abolished the party list (Buehler 2010: 272). As a result, the seats won by a party in the local parliament belong to its candidates who received the largest number of popular votes. This series of reforms has made the legislative elections as competitive as those for the executive, since the candidates must also compete directly with other candidates in the same party.

The change had an instant impact on the behaviour of local government. Many people believe that political motives also influenced Mayor Maula's decision to issue the decree on the fee waiver in puskesmas and pustu. Selle KS Dalle (2008: 60) explains that:

the motivation of Mayor Maula in issuing the policy in the last period of his administration was not only his agreement with the policy and his willingness to implement it. The decision was also driven by a political motivation to use the policy to attract voters for his campaign in his bid for re-election. He assumed that there would be a direct mayoral election in Makassar. If the election had been held on 2 December 2003, Makassar would have been the first municipality to have a direct local election. However, Golongan Karya, the ruling party in the local parliament, did not want the mayor to be re-elected. The party tried hard to have the election before the issuance of the new law stipulating direct local elections. The local parliament had the authority to nominate and appoint a new mayor. In the end, their efforts succeeded and they replaced Mayor Maula with Ilham Arief Sirajuddin.

The new mayor is very aware of the change in the local political environment. During his first term, he was famous for his openness and willingness to have a dialogue with citizens, civil society organizations and the media. As Sujito (2008: 30) concludes, the new mayor tries to play the politics of accommodation by listening to inputs and feedback from various local stakeholders. He decided to maintain the policy on health care, strengthened its legal basis and replicated the reform in other policy areas.

The Municipality Ombudsman Commission (Komisi Ombudsman Daerah), established in 2009, was another invention of Mayor Ilham and his accommodative politics. The commission facilitates conflict mediation between citizens, as public service users, and the local service providers, and makes recommendations for local government to improve the quality of its services. Although its effectiveness and independence have not yet been tested, the existence of the commission shows that the local government has a strong commitment to reinforcing local accountability mechanisms by increasing the participation of stakeholders.

In general, the municipal government has adopted Mayor Ilham's style in building constructive relationships with the mass media and local NGOs. It enables the press to have direct communications with and access to key officials in the local government, and provides more channels for gaining the latest information about ongoing development processes in Makassar. Buyung Maksum believes that this situation is conducive to improvements in the accountability of the local decision-making process. He states that:

I believe that the quality of the relationship between local government and the media will influence the quality of governance. It is obvious that the more open the government (towards the media), the more it is possible for the government to apply good governance principles. My experience shows me that local government that is less responsive to and less friendly with the media has a tendency to abuse its authority. The local government in Makassar is more transparent and accountable, compared to other districts in the province such as Bulukumba, Gowa and Sinjai, due to its positive attitude to the media and civil society as a whole.¹⁵

This trend is expected to continue in Makassar due to the re-election of Mayor Ilham for his second term – to 2014. The continual growth in the local media, especially newspapers, will limit the possibility that local government will reverse this tendency. The stronger national trend in favour of transparency and public participation, as stipulated in Law no. 14/2008 on Transparency of Information and Law no. 25/2009 on Public Services, will ensure that local government adopts an open and transparent relationship with its citizens and other local stakeholders over the long term.

4.4. Consolidation of local civil society

The consolidation of local civil society organizations has played a significant role in encouraging the development of stronger accountability mechanisms. Consolidated groups can deliver more coherent messages and create a more effective impact with their advocacy. However, civil society in Makassar in the 1980s was fragmented and lacked coordination. Although the number of civil society organizations was growing, they worked as individual organizations and not as a movement with a common or mutual agenda. Most faced severe financial constraints and had only a limited network.

The early process of consolidation was initiated in 1988–1989 by a group of prominent NGOs leaders in Makassar. Continual dialogue among these leaders resulted in the formation of FIK LSM as a joint communication and coordination forum for local NGOs. The six NGOs that joined the forum appointed Mapeaty Nyorong as the first forum coordinator. The main agendas of FIK LSM were increasing the visibility of local NGOs among other stakeholders, developing the capacity of member organizations and improving the effectiveness of their programmes. After changing its name from FIK LSM to FIK ORNOP in 2000, the forum grew to facilitate the participation of 44 member organizations in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi province.

The development of FIK ORNOP marked a shift in the NGOs' strategy for influencing change in Makassar. The NGOs began to put more emphasize on policy level change to complement their agenda of grassroots and community empowerment. A number of important new issues, such as basic service delivery and social policy reform, HIV/AIDS and human rights, were added to the advocacy agenda.

Furthermore, according to Khudri Arsyad (Sujito 2008: 42), the NGOs decided to alter their strategy from 'opposition' to that of 'critical partner' to local government. This meant that the NGOs started to develop closer engagement with the local government and to participate directly in the formal policymaking arena. They used their involvement to deliver their input from inside the process. At the same time, however, they expanded the network to build alliances with strategic partners, such as the mass media, as a tool to strengthen their voice and deliver it indirectly from the outside.

Some of the most prominent NGO leaders also developed informal relationships with key government officials. Like the journalists, this informal channel could serve as a hotline for NGOs to access the latest inside information on the policymaking process. It could also

serve as an unrestricted channel for NGOs to deliver their input in order to influence current practice.

This 'double-track strategy' was able to put more pressure on the government. The fee waiver policy in puskesmas shows that the strategy could work well. The NGOs delivered their criticisms of the local government through the mass media, but they were also using their informal channels to supply local government with a possible solution. However, there is trade-off involved in the strategy. According to Khudri (Sujito 2008: 42):

by applying this strategy, the NGOs must change their advocacy goal from the idealistic level to more technical and practical solutions. The local government and the parliament think in pragmatic ways. Therefore, in order to be accepted and form an engagement with them, the NGOs must also take a more realistic approach and propose workable solutions that are often incremental in nature rather than comprehensive reforms.

In this strategy, the NGOs must sometimes avoid direct confrontation and instead choose lengthy negotiations with the local government or the local parliament in order to achieve change. The NGOs must also be prepared to be regarded as having been co-opted by the government, and must therefore be extra cautious about keeping their independence intact during the most critical engagements.

Regardless of the risks and trade-offs, the NGOs will maintain their current strategy. The re-election of Mayor Ilham for a second term will ensure that local government remains open to and welcoming of engagement with civil society. The main challenge will be to strengthen this ongoing partnership and expand the influence of NGOs in the formal policymaking arena.

4.5. Ineffective oversight mechanisms in the local parliament

By law, the local parliament has an important role in safeguarding local accountability. The local parliament has legislative, budgetary and oversight functions that give it the authority to issue local regulations with the mayor, discuss and approve proposed government budgets and monitor the implementation and regulation of the approved budget. However, as an institution that functions to provide checks and balances, the local parliament in Makassar lacks adequate capacity to perform its functions well (Sujito 2008: 31). NGOs perceive that many parliamentarians do not have good *levels* of knowledge of the budgeting process and do not possess accurate information when conducting the legislative function (Sujito 2008: 31).

Executive power, under the leadership of Mayor Ilham, thus becomes more dominant in the planning and budgeting processes. The executive leads the annual policy planning process and budget negotiations with the parliament. In his first period in office, the mayor used his strong communication and lobbying skills to keep the planning schedule on track and minimize disputes with the parliament on the budget (Sujito 2008: 30–31). Most of the time, the parliament endorsed the local executive's proposals after only minimal negotiations. The

fact that the mayor comes from Golongan Karya, the major ruling party in the local parliament, makes this dominance more obvious. Many NGO activists in Makassar think that this dominance is already too strong (Sujito 2008: 31).

However, domination of the legislative authority by local executive power is a common trend in Indonesia. Buehler (2010: 277–280) concludes that after a brief period of legislative domination, national law is currently backing stronger local executives. Law no. 32/2004 on Regional Government, for example, strengthened the fiscal authority of the mayor and district head and even allows the district head to intervene in the work of the parliament in appointing the civil servants that work in the parliamentary secretariat (Buehler 2010: 279).

Furthermore, a new law on Regional Government, Law no. 12/2008, has reduced the institutional authority of local parliaments (Buehler 2010: 279). The local parliament no longer has the power to establish a supervisory committee to oversee the election of the mayor or district leader. This further symbolizes the declining effectiveness of local parliaments to conduct oversight of the local executive (Buehler 2010: 280).

This situation is not ideal for local accountability since the strength of the formal mechanisms are eroded over time. However, the ineffectiveness of the formal mechanisms has highlighted the importance of alternative mechanisms. The alliance between the mass media and NGOs has become an important alternative. Citizens who are aware of the poor performance of the formal mechanisms thus depend on informal mechanisms to channel their voice.

The NGOs have tried to shift this imbalance and empower the local parliament. FIK ORNOP, for example, has identified several members of parliament, involved them in its activities, and supplied them with data and information that could help them do their work better. These efforts have succeeded in enhancing the capacity of those members and turned them into resourceful members of their parliamentary committees. However, the number is too few and most of them are members of the smaller political parties that only have limited influence in the parliament.

The mass media is aware of the urgent need to empower the parliament. Taufiq Nahwi Rasul, the Director of Mercurius TOP FM, believes that the media could empower parliamentarians by making the parliament more accountable to the citizens who vote for them.¹⁶ The radio, for example, could report live on debates and meetings inside the parliament, or broadcast the negotiation process between the local executive and the parliament on the annual budget allocation. Direct supervision by the public could provide moral support to the parliamentarians and push the parliament to optimize its limited power to scrutinize the executive.

Although the prospects remain uncertain, the results of the 2009 election in Makassar could provide opportunities for change. Golongan Karya still has the largest number of seats, but other parties have slashed its majority and reduced its domination. The number of seats won by other parties, such as the Democrat Party (Partai Demokrat), Islamic Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera) and the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional), increased significantly. A more equal distribution of power in the local parliament will open

up more space for civil society actors, such as NGOs and the mass media, for closer engagement and to empower the parliament to conduct its role more effectively.

5. Conclusions

The alliance between the local mass media and NGOs in Makassar municipality has succeeded in promoting responsive health care services for the poor. In the bigger picture, the long-term partnership between these two civil society actors has provided citizens with an alternative accountability mechanism for exercising popular control over the performance of local government. Citizens find that the mechanism is more accessible and receptive than existing formal mechanisms. The mechanism is thus considered to be effective and the local government also acknowledges and welcomes it.

Several factors have contributed to the effectiveness of the mechanism. Some were influenced by national, macro-level processes, although the local context in Makassar was still significant. The introduction of a nationwide 'big bang decentralization', the existence of a positive enabling environment for press freedom, tighter political competition at the local level, continual consolidation among local civil society organizations, and the ineffectiveness of the local parliament in carrying out its oversight role of local government were all factors that determined the functioning of the mechanism. The interrelation between external and internal factors is complex and should not be ignored when designing systematic efforts to improve existing conditions.

Currently, political actors, such as political parties and their representatives in the local parliament, play only a limited role in existing accountability mechanisms. Laws and regulations have weakened their oversight function and increased the domination of executive power in local government. They also have limited technical capacity, which reduces their effectiveness. However, the NGOs and the mass media still consider them to be important actors and believe that civil society must help them to improve their capacity and knowledge.

The general trend in the foreseeable future shows a possible strengthening of local level accountability. New national laws that have extended the practice of transparency and accountability will push local government to maintain its positive attitude towards these principles. The re-election of Mayor Ilham, the continued expansion of the media and ongoing civil society consolidation will ensure that existing accountability mechanisms remain intact.

The challenge will be to revitalize the formal accountability mechanisms inherent in the oversight functions of the local parliament. The limitations placed on it by current national laws will be the main constraint on the effective role of the local parliament. However, a more equitable sharing of power in the current local parliament brings with it opportunities for closer partnerships between the parliament and civil society organizations.

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¹ Interview with M. Taufiq Nahwi Rasul, Radio Mercurius TOP FM, 17 April 2010.

² Interview with Jumadi Mappanganro, *Tribun Timur*, 13 April 2010.

³ Interview with Siswan Tiro, FIK ORNOP staff, 10 May 2010.

⁴ Interview with Buyung Maksum, *Fajar*, 14 April 2010.

⁵ The incumbent mayor asked the local parliament to delay the election date in Makassar until the national parliament approved the Law that stipulates direct election at province and district level. The local parliament denied his request and proceeded with the existing indirect selection mechanism

⁶ Interview with Jumadi Mappanganro. op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Interview with Siswan Tiro, op. cit.

⁹ Interview with Buyung Maksum, op. cit.

¹⁰ Interview with Jumadi Mappanganro, op. cit.

¹¹ Interview with M. Taufiq Nahwi Rasul, op. cit.

¹² Summarized from interviews with various sources.

¹³ Interview with Baharuddin, FIK ORNOP staff, 13 April 2010.

¹⁴ Interview with Jumadi Mappanganro, op. cit.

¹⁵ Interview with Buyung Maksum, op. cit.

¹⁶ Interview with M. Taufiq Nahwi Rasul, op. cit.