

Institutional Pressures and Strategic Responses: The transformation of an INGO

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Abstract. The International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) is one of key actors in the development sector and for the past decade some development International NGOs have transformed into a national entity in the developing country they operate. This paper explores how and why the institutional pressures push the organization to take strategic responses through the transformation of organization structure. A single case study of one of the large INGO in Indonesia transforming into a local foundation is performed. Data compilation includes semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. Oliver's (1991) and Goodstein (2017) model of strategic choice provides the theoretical framework on which organization strategic responses to acquiesce, compromise, avoid, reject and manipulate and the main factors of institutional pressures are discussed. In the transformation circumstance, the organization implements several strategy models to tackle multi-faceted institutional pressures. The findings suggest that the organization transformation from the INGO to local organization, while appearing to be a major overhaul, in many aspects turned out to be a continuation of the existing international organization body. The study not only shows the importance of the strategic response taken by the organization, but particularly of ways to decentralize authority from the international parent organization to any new form of organization.

Keywords: INGO, Organizational Change, Future INGOs, Organizational Strategy, Decentralization of International NGOs

1 Introduction

The transformation process in the international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) which have become the local organization is analyzed in this paper to explore organization's strategic response to the increasing institutional pressures in the era of the globalization.

1.1 NGO and International Aid

An NGO can be categorized as an International NGO (INGO) when there is an international coordinating body that facilitates the work of its members at the international level, or an NGO that has an extensive network of field offices at country or regional levels, and where the NGO has internationally diverse sources of revenue [1]. According to the Union of International Associations (UIA), INGOs refer to organizations formed for non-profit purposes, not formed by governments and operating in three or more countries (UIA, 2010). In other literature, NGOs like this mostly depend on donor funds and are very formal and professional in their operations (Pearce in Kalb, 2006). INGO institutions originating from donor countries differ from other civil society-based organizations (CSOs) in donor and recipient countries in several aspects,

namely global operations, geographic reach, size and scope, access to funding, budget, cooperation, legitimacy and role in development [2]. According to data from the Union of International Associations, the number of International NGOs in 2018 was 27,510 organizations (UIA, 2020) and this is an increase from 25,000 organizations in 2009.

The NGO sector worldwide receives approximately 20% of the total funding for humanitarian assistance in the world and is the second only to multilateral agencies, which are primarily United Nations agencies (Development Initiative, 2018). Of NGO receipts, 94% of funding was absorbed by INGOs in 2017 and this is an increase from 85% in 2016. There was also a slight increase in funding to national and local non-governmental organizations, from 1.7% funding of all NGOs in 2016 to 2.7% in 2017 (UIA Report, 2019). The combined annual budgets of major INGOs can even exceed those of donor countries. Eight major organizations (World Vision International, Oxfam International, Save the Children International, FORPA, Médecins Sans Frontières, CARE International, CARITAS International and ActionAid International) had revenues of more than US\$11.7 billion in 2011, a 40 percent increase over 2005 [2]. With this number of INGOs and funds managed, INGOs are increasingly becoming an important agent in the process of making public policy and in aid governance on a global scale [2].

In the beginning, NGOs were believed to be "new agents that could compensate for the institutional weaknesses of the state and the market and non-governmental organizations were able to provide services to the poor in a fair and efficient manner" [1]. Although initially seen as a 'magic bullet' for development [3], NGOs have faced increasing scrutiny because of their actions. INGOs are deemed to be a 'new imperialism' for the action to dominate and exploit the developing countries [4]. In this context, their influence through political tools is not just a way to control. In fact, multinational institutions and INGOs are able to act as 'mediators' to put pressure on the countries [4]. Kuruppu [4] wrote that donors, formed with a neo-liberal agenda, are more likely to support organizations that are able to promote neo-liberal dogmas such as liberal democracy. Since the INGO and the donors bring in the 'Western' ideologies, the INGOs are seen as a force opposing the national government or state and an unwanted influencer of new values [5]. In one view, NGOs are seen as a force for balancing and controlling forces over the state and it was established to pay attention to social issues, humanity, improvement in welfare, fight against social inequality and improvement of human and natural welfare. This focus on local communities has led to criticism of INGOs' effectiveness in service delivery, that INGOs' work is 'highly local and by no means permanent' [3]. Davies concludes, while the impact of INGO work reaches many achievements, INGOs continue to receive criticism that INGOs often weaken government institutions that are often already vulnerable from the developing countries [6].

Funding is a major part of the INGO-donor relationship. INGO funding differs from one INGO to another but in general INGOs depend on funding from government donors (developed countries) for about half of their budget/income/INGO [2]. Although funding from the donor government is critical for INGOs, on the other hand INGOs are also important for the government of the donor country. INGOs represent the main avenue by which foreign governments work in developing/poor countries [2]. The donors determine the sector, the country and also their priority thematic areas and these create a high competition among NGOs. Institutional donors are searching for, and finding, alternative partners – triggered by the demand for efficiency, for novelty, for results, and sometimes for ideological reinforcements [7]. The changes in developing countries with improving economic conditions and increasing middle class with their philanthropic actions, open up opportunities for raising funds from individual donors. The new technology savvy generation are taking the philanthropic decisions

into their hands, as they find more direct ways to demonstrate their compassion - from peer-to-peer financing to financial transfer platforms. The form of monthly aid payments slowly become unattractive. People increasingly use technology to circumnavigate INGOs operationally, by participating in direct action.

The polarization of the 'North' (developed countries) and the 'South' (the partner organizations) has created its own complications. National or local NGOs (often called local community-based NGOs) are very important partners because they understand the context in grassroots communities. In recent years, the movement 'Shift The Power' emphasized the call for INGOs to give greater authority to their counterparts in the South and for INGOs to stop representing and speaking on behalf of the South [8].

The changes and pressures described above are well recognized by actors in the INGO sector and a number of major development INGOs are looking for new business models. One of them is the process of transforming INGOs into locally-registered institutions in several INGOs which are seen as a form of a power shift movement from the North (or 'West') to the South [5]. In the last few decades, through organizational changes concerning the regulation of the power structure within the organization and the efficiency, INGOs moved offices to locations close to humanitarian aid locations, reduced the number of foreign workers, partnered with more local organizations and localized decision makers. Action Aid moved its headquarters from London-UK to Johannesburg-South Africa in 2004, and Oxfam International from Oxford-UK to Nairobi-Kenya in 2017. Organizational transformation in the form of transferring administrative power from the central authority to regional and local offices is defined as decentralization [5].

Development INGOs themselves are undergoing a process of transforming their organizational structure. Several large INGOs have an international confederation structure, for example in organizations such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Plan International and Care. Nine Oxfam groups around the world – Australia, Belgium, Canada, Hong Kong, Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada, UK and USA, merged to form Oxfam International to achieve common goals, promote, assist and coordinate collaboration among them so that organizations can exert greater influence. There is a spectrum of organizational legal forms adopted by INGOs, depending on the degree of decentralization in the decision-making structure. On one spectrum, there are INGOs which are traditionally groups of several nationally based organizations that share the same name but have different decision-making pathways (such as Plan International, Oxfam, Save the Children). On the other side of the spectrum, there are unitary institutions, where the central office provides direction and action to offices in aid recipient countries (ie. World Vision).

This study focuses on the institutional pressures and transformation process undergone by a large international INGO after Indonesia moved to a 'middle-income' country status, specifically during the period of 2016 to 2019. The international headquarter and national affiliation of the large NGO are referred under the pseudonym FORPA Global, FORPA Federation, FORPA Indonesia and FORPA Indonesia Foundation. The study connected the approach from perspective of the theory and the practice, exploring the way that strategic response taken by the organizations. It demonstrated multi-faceted dimensions involving the decentralization in different way than those theoretically established by Oliver [9] and Goodstein [10].

1.2 Institutional Pressure and Strategic Responses

The development of institutional theory has led to significant insights regarding the importance of institutional environments to organizational structures and actions. Goodstein identifies the conditions under which we might expect an organization to respond to changes in

its environment by adding new program and those that might lead an organization to pursue a different strategy [10]. The core of Oliver's [9] insightful examination of strategic responses to institutional pressures has been centered on the question on how the organization strategically respond to institutional pressures and what factors affect organization response.

Oliver [9] discussed a theoretical framework by assuming that the organizational responsiveness to institutional pressures is a strategic option. Oliver offers a typology of five broad strategies in responding to institutional processes. First, organization may *acquiesce* and conform fully to institutional pressures and expectation. Second, organizations may *compromise* by complying in partial ways with institutional demands. Third, they may *avoid* institutional pressures with the actions such as hiding nonconformity, responding symbolically and buffering themselves. Fourth, they may *defy* actively reject institutional norms or expectations from institutional pressures. Fifth, organizations may *manipulate* their action, showing an aggressive posture toward institutional agents and, attempting actively change or exert power over institutional pressures. Table 1 is adapted from Oliver's [9] typology.

Table 1. Oliver's [9] Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes

Strategies	Tactics	Examples
Acquiesce	Habit	Complying invisible, taken-for-granted norms
	Imitate	Copying institutional models
	Comply	Adhering to rules and accepting norms
Compromise	Balance	Balancing the expectations of multiple constituents
	Pacify	Accommodating institutional elements
	Bargain	Negotiating with institutional stakeholders
Avoid	Conceal	Hiding nonconformity
	Buffer	Detaching institutional attachment
	Escape	Modifying goals, activities or domains
Defy	Dismiss	Rejecting explicit norms and values
	Challenge	Disputing rules and requirement
	Attack	Assaulting the sources of institutional pressure
Manipulate	Co-opt	Importing influential constituents
	Influence	Forming values and criteria
	Control	Dictating institutional constituents and processes

According to Oliver [9] there are five factors involving in the international pressure: cause, constituents, content, control and context. Cause are the underlying rationale or expectations related to institutional pressures. Constituent refers the group that pushes the institutional pressures on the organization. Content refers to the norms or requirement the organization is being pressured to conform to. Control refers to the means the institutional pressures are being exerted. Context refers to the environmental content within which institutional pressures are being exerted. Table 2 is adapted from Oliver's [9] institutional factors.

Table 2. Oliver's [9] Antecedents of Strategic Responses

Institutional Factor	Research Question	Predictive Dimensions
Cause	Why is the organization being pressured to conform to institutional rules or expectations	Legitimacy or social fitness Efficiency or economic fitness

Institutional Factor	Research Question	Predictive Dimensions
Constituents	Who is exerting institutional pressures on the organization	Multiplicity of constituent demands Dependence on institutional constituents
Content	To what norms or requirements is the organization being pressures being exerted?	Consistency with organizational goals Discretionary constraints imposed on the organization
Control	How or by what means are the institutional pressures being exerted?	Legal coercion or enforcement Voluntary diffusion of norms
Context	What is the environmental context within which institutional pressures are being exerted?	Environmental uncertainty Environmental interconnectedness

2 Method

A qualitative case study is used in this study since the research question asks a ‘how’ question by further exploring the reasons ‘why’ an INGO transformed from an INGO to a local organization structure. Qualitative case studies facilitate the compilation of rich and specific data in contextual manner [11]. The interviews, observation and document analysis are analyzed as the tripartite data collection method in order to produce a high quality evidence relevant to the research question.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted to a number of employees in the organization, including the country senior management, field office coordinator and the global senior staff as well as the former senior staffs being involved during the transformation period. This allows the exploration of meaning and various perspectives regarding organizational transformation from different parts of the INGO. Interviews are formally arranged through the virtual online platform as they are conducted during the pandemic time. Interviews range from one hour to 2 hour in length.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 FORPA Indonesia in the Indonesian legal and FORPA Global context

FORPA Indonesia was established in 1937 as the Country Office under the structure of FORPA Global. The country office is led by a Country Director who is responsible for the implementation of program operations in the country and report to the Regional Director at the Regional Hub. As a branch office of FORPA Global, FORPA Indonesia have the management structure under the structure of FORPA Global. FORPA Indonesia is considered as the International Non-Governmental Organizations by the Government of Indonesia and is covered by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with one of the Ministry of the Government of Indonesia. The MOU is set every three year and it contains the detailed plan of FORPA Indonesia to assist the government in the development of the community social and economic

program with thematic-centered focus. The current MOU with FORPA Indonesia is expired by the 2023 and the FORPA Indonesia still exists together with the FORPA Indonesia Foundation.

FORPA Indonesia Foundation was locally registered as a foundation in Indonesia in 2017 and started the operation in 2018. In 2014, the FORPA Global had started the process to transform the FORPA Indonesia to become locally-registered foundation by 2017 and to become a New Member of the FORPA Federation by 2023. In 2016, Indonesia was approved by the International Board as priority prospect for becoming a New Member of the FORPA Federation. This process has positioned the FORPA Indonesia Foundation not only as the locally-registered organization in the legal context of the Indonesia, but also as the Prospective member of FORPA Federation.

3.2 Factors of institutional pressures leading to transformation

For the past decade, the FORPA Global, like many other INGOs, has faced the pressure from various constituents such as the donor organization and national government to increase the representation of the Southern world for recognition of organizational legitimacy and social compatibility in the countries in which they operate. Geopolitical influence has re-aligned – moving further away from the Northern world, namely the United States and Western Europe to a Southern world where countries managed to achieve socio-economic success. The traditional approach of 'aid' or 'charity' that once believed to be a solution to the development work, has been considered insufficient in overcoming the problems of persistent poverty and injustice.

The funding and donor environment globally has also changed and has strong effects to FORPA Indonesia. There has been increasing competition in accessing funding as donor governments rethink and change the international-aid commitments and distribution structures while there have been intense demands for the accountability of development organization. Donor organization started to channel funds through national and local organizations as they have become more and more experienced in conducting projects, have local grassroots perspective and do not carry high overhead cost caused by the global nature of the INGO, i.e. cost of global office and expatriates. The program of FORPA Indonesia had operated with financial support also from individual donations, mainly from European countries. However the sponsors from Western European countries has shifted their sponsorship funds to the African region as Indonesia has become middle-income country.

Indonesia has experienced strong economic growth since 2010. During the global financial crisis, Indonesia outperformed its regional neighbors and joined China and India as the only G20 members posting growth. Indonesian economy is the 16th largest economy by nominal GDP and 15th by purchasing power globally. Southeast Asia is undergoing rapid economic growth for the last ten years, which encourages global corporations to establish their offices locally. Due to their increasing focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), multilaterals started reaching out to the communities they are operating in thus creating environment for fundraising.

Philanthropy in Indonesia has grown in terms of the volume and size of charitable donations. Philanthropy in Indonesia is becoming more institutionalized with a steady increase in the number of charitable foundations. Charitable foundations generate income through raising funds from corporate partnerships, government, grant making foundations and individual donations.

Indonesia has a large and rapidly growing middle class and affluent consumer population. The majority of this middle class and affluent group is located in the five provinces in Java. Furthermore, Indonesia is ranked in the top ten countries for donations to the charity. On average 66% of Indonesians donate to a local charity. Besides the Corporate Social Responsibility was

introduced in Indonesia in 2001. Government policy (Law No. 40 of/2007 on Corporations) requires companies to fulfill their CSR by contributing to social development. A number of corporate foundations have been established in Indonesia and tend to support “safe” causes, such as education, health, environmental conservation, and small business development. Media-based philanthropy is also a new and growing area of philanthropic practice in Indonesia. It started as fundraising drives by the media in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters and other humanitarian crisis. The media companies expanded their philanthropic engagement to implementing programs addressing a range of social needs.

The Indonesian government has moved a long way over the past two decades from its mistrust of civil society organizations. It now recognizes: the need to invest in social development, the capacity constraints of government organizations, and the potential advantages of engaging positively with local NGOs to support social development. In 2013, the government has issued a government regulation on the civil society organization that provides supporting environment for civil society to set up an organization. In the other hand, the government restricts where INGOs can work (not allowed in the most marginalized territories) and also has started to ask INGOs about “exit plans.” The economic growth has increased in western Indonesia, leaving eastern regions lagging behind. Eastern regions have a high proportion of marginalized communities. The Government of Indonesia limits INGOs from operating in most marginalized areas, such as Papua, Maluku, and Aceh. As a locally registered foundation, FORPA Indonesia may be eligible to enter these areas.

There is evidence of both government and local corporates funding local civil society organizations, as well as a market for regular individual giving. In this rapidly growing economy, FORPA Indonesia want to establish local fundraising.

From the perspective of FORPA Federation, it is important for FORPA Federation to diversify its membership. Indonesia is the fourth most populous country with the largest number of Muslims and the 16th largest economy in the world. Indonesia’s voice in the region and globally is strategically important as Indonesia is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC), and G20. As the seat of the ASEAN Secretariat, Indonesia holds a significant role in shaping the position and influence of Southeast Asia globally. As such, the case could easily be made for FORPA International to want to have strong southern members. The majority of FORPA federation members have been represented by northern countries. To diversify a governance voice in the Member’s Assembly, FORPA Federations invited southern countries with low/middle income to become full members of the organization. FORPA Indonesia successfully fulfills FORPA’s diversification criteria.

3.3 Strategic responses of FORPA Global and FORPA Federation

Acquiescence. The transformation decision for FORPA Indonesia has followed the steps taken by other similar development INGOs that had taken the route to become the local organizations. They have been successfully operating their business and received significant domestic funding to fund their program. Within FORPA itself, several country offices have transformed into local organizations and have been the permanent federation members of FORPA Federation. The FORPA Indonesia Foundation not only seeks for the new funding (domestic and foreign sources) but also conduct program operations in the country.

In the earlier stage of the transformation, FORPA conducted an analysis of three major studies by a local Indonesian consultant, which explores the study of market, local fundraising and foundation set-up. These three studies showed the path for the organization to be an locally-registered institution and the member of Federation as FORPA Indonesia fulfills the criteria: 1)

there is a plan in place to jointly develop the governance structure with FORPA Indonesia and FORPA Global, 2) financially, Indonesia has a strong economic position and well-institutionalized philanthropic sector with a wide range of donors, 3) program quality is on par with the FORPA Global's standards which is documented by a number of reviews, and 4) FORPA Indonesia has strong regional and global connections with other FORPA Global offices and external organizations. This shows the organization acquiesce a strategy that accept the trend and direction from the factors of institutional pressure put upon them. **Compromise.** As the FORPA Indonesia had operated, it had faced with conflicting institutional pressures or inconsistencies between constituent's expectations and internal organizational goals. In these circumstances, the organization implemented several tactics to balance, pacify or negotiate with external constituents. The compromise tactic actually reflects the organization's very thin resistance to environmental pressures on the organization.

The tactics to balance occurs in the process with the FORPA International, donor agencies, Indonesian government and local partners. While the FORPA Indonesia Foundation is an independent legal entity, it still has to follow the mission, vision and strategic direction of FORPA Global. The majority of funding came from international funding provided by donors that have a great trust in the global FORPA's reputation. FORPA Indonesia Foundation carries out new activities and business models in relation to domestic fundraising. On the other hand, the Indonesian government has limited the foreign/international organizations to work in certain development sectors. One example is the natural disaster management program which can only be carried out by local organizations so it is impossible for international organizations to work alone on this program while the international organizations usually have strong funding for disaster management. The Indonesian government has put strict regulation for the local foundation which have international affiliates to ensure that it is not mainly used by the international body to withdraw funds from the local sources. The regulation comes in the administrative measures such as maintenance of separate physical of the office premise, the organization branding and the funds transfer outside the country. The local organizational partners (i.e. NGOs or civil society associations) are important constituents as they have expertise and knowledge in the local context in. The transformation plan has posed some major concerns from local partners. As FORPA Indonesia becomes local organization, both FORPA and local partners may bid for the local funding opportunities and in the other hand, without the assistance of INGO in preparing funding proposal, they would have limited capacity to access international funding sources. The local partners had also lost the capacity building program, one of the main activities played by the INGO. FORPA Indonesia Foundation implements an operational strategy to choose the funding opportunities which is suitable and fair for both organizations.

FORPA Indonesia carried out a series of negotiations (bargain) with the FORPA Global in regards to the staff employment and remuneration systems for the local staff. Instead of changing to the local standards, FORPA Indonesia Foundation follows the practices and standards of international organizations as a way to retain competent work force.

FORPA Indonesia Foundation also negotiated the terms and condition of the international funding with other member of FORPA Federation since the member of Federation has taken the major role in the context of international donor organizations and individual sponsor. FORPA Indonesia Foundation has accepted sharing management fees with the other respective Federation member, although the process for obtaining global call funds did not involve the significant role of Federation member. In some cases, donor organizations would prefer to involving the NO office in funding cooperation with the FORPA Indonesia Foundation, showing a lack of trust with the new local organization.

Manipulation. Strategic response by manipulation is the most active form of response to pressure because this strategy aims to actively change or even reverse power over the expected outcomes of the change pressure imposed on the organization. Manipulation is a deliberate and even opportunistic attempt to co-opt, influence or control institutional pressures and their result.

The FORPA Global greatly influenced the establishment of the local board of the foundation, by intervening in the process of appointment of the local board members. The selection process is highly micro-managed and in some aspects ignored the local practice, customs and contexts. FORPA Global even appointed the Regional Director as a member of local board. While FORPA Global deliberately to ensure the smooth running of the foundation to become the permanent member of federation, it has focused greatly on the interest of the FORPA Global and Federation.

Upon the establishment of the FORPA Foundation, the FORPA Indonesia as an INGO still operates in Indonesia in accordance with the MSP with the government of Indonesia until 2022. From the government side, the existence of FORPA Indonesia Foundation is well acknowledged as an 'exit plan' from FORPA as an international organization. The two organizations running at the same time is deemed critical for the FORPA Global as it gives the full assurance of the organization sustainability in Indonesia during this transformation period.

4 Conclusion

The result of the study may be used to other context of organization transformation. In terms of theoretical implication, this paper has enriched the understanding of Oliver's [12] typology of strategic response by establishing a pathway for organization transformation from traditional organization to a novel organization structure. The theoretical rationale underlying conformity or resistance to institutional rules and expectations surround both the willingness and ability of organizations to conform to the institutional environment. The scope conditions under which organizations are willing to conform are bounded by organizational skepticism, political self-interest and organizational control. While Oliver's framework had been used for Goodstein's [13] research with quantitative methodology, the framework can still be used for the research with qualitative methodology.

From practical and managerial implications, this study highlight the socio-economic pressure that is faced by INGOs to conform to the organization environment or become less relevant. The transformation process of international organization, while appears to achieve the target of the locally-registered organization, entails the organization strategy which still retains the control from the parent organization and the continuation of international organization body. This is evident in various operational strategies which are in favor of the interest of the international parent organization as the local organization is planned to be a prospective member of the international board of the parent organization. Since the international non-governmental organization continues to search for a suitable model to sustain their presence in the globalization setting, they have to consider the strategy of decentralization approach where authority is given at full to the new local organization. Further case study research can explore on the aspect of the authority delegation and examine the new form of INGO emerging in the response to the institutional pressures.

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