



# CSOs and Nuclear Energy in Southeast Asia

Cases of engagement from  
Indonesia and the Philippines

# “Civil Society”

- According to Alagappa: “first, a realm in the interstices of the state, political society, the market, and the society at large for organization by nonstate, nonmarket groups that take collective action in the pursuit of the public good; second, a distinct sphere for discourse and construction of normative ideals through interaction among nonstate groups on the basis of ideas and arguments; third, an autonomous arena of self-governance by nonstate actors in certain issue areas; and, fourth, *an instrument for collective action to protect the autonomy of the nonstate public realm, affect regime type, and influence the politics and policies of the state, political society, and the market.*” [1]
- “Self-organized, self-governing, nonstate, nonprofit, nonprivate institutions that employ nonviolent means to achieve a public interest or good through collective action” [2]

[1] Muthiah Alagappa, *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 2004, p. 32. Italics added.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

# CSOs in the Philippines

- First mobilized against NPPs 1981; currently 2 main positions:
- 1. Env./safety concerns – eg. Greenpeace SE Asia; Philippine Climate Watch Alliance.
- 2. Concern over economic costs of NPP rehabilitation (and secondarily safety concerns) – eg. Freedom from Debt Coalition
- **Strategies:** Public protests, est. networks to facilitate info-sharing/dissemination, stimulating public debate via legislative hearings, speaking to media on feasibility of NPP, exerting pressure on members of Congress, use of scientific experts.
- **Impact:** Significant role – org. opposition in Congress; bill relegated to bottom of legislative agenda until after elections; several pres. candidates publicly declared opposition to NPP; CSOs actively campaigned for renewable energy law – signed by Arroyo Dec. 2008.

# CSOs in Indonesia

- CSO involvement began early 1990s; currently three main positions:
- **1. Outright opposition**– eg. Greenpeace Indo., MANUSIA, Walhi; primarily safety concerns due to geog. unsuitability of planned locations, low capability (HR and tech.), potentially creating dependency on foreign countries with the required tech.
- **2. Middle ground** – eg. Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR) and Indonesian Institute for Energy Economics (IIEE); share some safety concerns with 1<sup>st</sup> group but remain open to poss. of NPPs (dependent on safety measures/tech.) due to ever inc. demand for energy.
- **3. Advocates of NPPs** – eg. MPEL, IEN, WIN; generally less organized; argues Indo. ready for NPP due to dev. of tech. early as 1960s and holds uranium reserves in Kalimantan (countering dependency argument).
- **Strategies:** First 2 groupings - public demonstrations, nat./reg. networking, providing forums for affected comm's, helping to dev. local capacities, direct engagement w. govt officials/agencies, public educ. (film, interviews, press releases, comics etc). 3<sup>rd</sup> group, less movement– mainly blogs, mailing lists, etc.
- **Impact:** Appears to have helped delay bidding process for NPP construction; however direct causal r'ship difficult to discern – other factors at play, eg. political calculations in lead up to pres. elections?



# Tentative Observations

- Study indicates that there is a growing and vibrant civil society in SE Asia; these groups are now more organized and strategic in their interaction with institutions both within and across the region.
- Although a contentious issue, not all CSOs (eg. Indo.) are advocating against nuclear energy, pointing to how CSOs with their own resources and knowledge are able to think and work alongside state actors in generating more informed decisions on imp. policy issues like nuclear energy.
- Networking has become a powerful strategy of CSOs; the dev. of coalitions nationally, regionally and globally potentially = greater policy impact. Transnational networking = inc. visibility of CSOs and a significant factor in their growing activism. Strategies have become more sophisticated, aided by adv. in info. and comm. tech.

# Tentative Observations cont.

- CSOs are no longer just conveyors of knowledge – but also credible actors able to articulate ‘new’ or alternative knowledge, using this to advocate for alternative policies, or propose their own policy frameworks.
- CSOs can help build capacity and promote bottom-up approaches to energy security – eg. NGOs in Indo. helping to build local capacity to generate electricity supply through micro-hydro power – demonstrates CSOs’ engagement goes beyond rhetoric to concrete actions to improve security and well-being.
- Efforts directed at generating information, promoting communication, persuasion, etc. all add up to enhancing the quality of governance. While direct causal impact of CSO engagement may still be hard to gauge, does not diminish fact that multi-level processes are taking place to hold decision-makers to account and promote governance norms to enable states/societies to manage the multifaceted nature of security challenges facing them today.