

## **The Role of Environmental NGOs in Indonesia's Policy on Re-Export Plastic Waste to Anticipate Non-Military Threats**

**Yordania Mega Priyanti<sup>1)</sup>, Herlina Juni Risma Saragih<sup>2)</sup>, Agung Risdhianto<sup>3)</sup>, Hikmat Zakky Almubaraq<sup>4)</sup>**

<sup>1,3,4)</sup> Defense Management, Defense Management Faculty, Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

<sup>2)</sup> Peace and Conflict Resolution, National Security Faculty, Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author

Email: <sup>1)</sup> [mega.yordania@gmail.com](mailto:mega.yordania@gmail.com), <sup>2)</sup> [herlinasara78@gmail.com](mailto:herlinasara78@gmail.com), <sup>3)</sup> [ag\\_ung@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ag_ung@yahoo.co.uk),

<sup>4)</sup> [zakkyvauri94@gmail.com](mailto:zakkyvauri94@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

*This paper analyzes an important gap in understanding the role of the Environmental Non-Government Organizations in Indonesia's policy on re-export waste. This paper provides insights into how NGOs can be more effective to enforce Indonesia's policy on re-export plastic waste to anticipate non-military threats and protect the environment and public health from the harmful effects of illegal waste imports. Moreover, this research will help to ensure that the government is held accountable for enforcing its policies regarding waste plastic import. Using the New social movement theory by Philip W. Sutton and the descriptive qualitative approach can answer and help to understand the role of Environmental NGOs. The result shows that Environmental NGOs played a significant role in shaping Indonesia's on implementing re-export plastic waste and used various actions such as advocacy, lobbying, and awareness campaigns to influence policy decisions and ensure that the government's policies were in line with environmental protection. The new social movement theory emphasizes the role of non-government organizations in shaping the social environment, especially in raising awareness of the environmental and health risks posed by plastic waste.*

**Keywords:** *The Role of Environment NGOs, Re-export Plastic Waste, New Social Movement, Non-Military Threats*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a big country that is in the public spotlight in natural resources. Unfortunately, Indonesia also becomes public spotlight on producer marine plastic. According to Detik News, Indonesia is the second-ranked of producer marine plastic in the world after China which reached 187.2 million tons (Abeedah, 2019). But Indonesia is still recipient of imported waste from other countries. After China banned the import of all waste in 2018 and passed its National Sword Policy, Indonesia saw an increase in waste imports, notably plastic waste (Patton & Li, 2021). So based on that data, Indonesia has been facing a plastic waste emergency because Indonesia is the second racks in the world in terms of producing plastic waste after China. As a result, more waste is come and being produced, including hazardous waste. The major risk of hazardous waste imports can be significant non-military threats to the environment and human health.

In response to the negative risk of hazardous waste, the Indonesia government has implemented several policies to regulate waste imports. One of the policies is the regulation concerning the provisions for the import of hazardous and non-toxic waste as industrial raw materials. The policy is a ban on the import of hazardous waste and waste exporters must get a license from Indonesian government. However, the implementation of the regulations has been challenging and waste imports still need to be addressed. One of the most challenging is smuggling and illegal processing. To address the imported waste smuggling, Indonesia re-exports 38 containers of illegal waste to other countries in 2019 (Gokkon, 2019). However, this implementation has been difficult to enforce and illegal waste imports continue to be a problem.

For example, throughout 2019-2022, thousands of cases of hazardous waste smuggling in imported waste for industrial raw materials were revealed (Flqri, 2022).

One of the challenges in forcing Indonesia's waste import is still a lack of coordination between Environmental Non-Governmental (NGOs) and the government on this issue. For example, Ecological Observation and Wetlands Conservation (ECOTON) demanded that the government enforce the re-export of imported waste and also deplored the supervision and application of rules that have been considered not well implemented (Riski, 2019). This demand shows that there is a lack of coordination between NGOs and the government on this issue. Based on that, this research would help to fill an important gap in understanding the role of environmental NGOs in Indonesia's policy on re-export waste. It would also provide insights into how NGOs can be more effective to enforce Indonesia's waste import policies to anticipate non-military threats and protect the environment and public health. Moreover, this research will help to ensure that the government is held accountable for enforcing its policies and that the environment is protected from the harmful effects of illegal waste imports.

In case addresses the gap in understanding the role of Environmental NGOs in Indonesia's policy on re-export waste, and provides insights into how NGOs can enforce waste import policies by using new social movement theory. Moreover, this theory can explain the role of non-state actors to organize, mobilize, and work together and to address specific issues, challenge existing power structures, and bring societal transformation. The book can explain about new social movement and the Role of Environmental NGOs is Explaining Environmentalism In Search of a New Social Movement by Philip W. Sutton which can be explained below:

*“The definition of new social movement theory concentrates on the ‘why’ of movement activity and negates new issues and stimulates new groups of people to mobilize. New social movement theory is the now widespread thesis of a shift towards post-industrialism. Moreover, new social theories could be used to provide answers as to why movements are ‘new’ in terms of shifts and long-term changes in the structure of society (post-industrialism), and resource mobilization to investigate how new social conflicts and grievances are turned into visible, and more or less organized” (Sutton, 2000)*

This theory can understand how and why the collective actions of individuals and groups. The important points of its definition of a new social movement are collective actors, having a common identity, must be able to least threaten ‘mass mobilization’, and aiming to defend or change society. By using the theory of new social movement is particularly relevant when examining the role of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in shaping Indonesia's policy on re-exporting plastic waste.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research uses a qualitative approach, which is qualitative descriptive. The qualitative approach means identifying a culture-sharing group and studying how it develops share patterns of behavior over time and for this study, the inquirer seeks to examine an issue related to the oppression of individuals by using literature study and narrative approach (John W. Cresswell, 2013). By selecting a literature study and narrative approach, the researcher can explore and search for information relevant to the discussion in the research that can be accounted for. The narrative approach means to explore and present the fundamental characteristics of a phenomenon, contributing to a deeper understanding of qualitative research methodologies. For

example, through articles both in online and bold media, books, pre-existing research, journal, as well as documents from government and non-government websites. The data collection may include observations, and examination of records, reports, photographs, and documents (Lambert & Lambert, 2012).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on analyzing the theory of new social movement and using qualitative descriptive, the research can find that Environmental NGOs played a significant role in shaping Indonesia's on implementing re-export plastic waste and used various actions such as advocacy, lobbying, and awareness campaigns to influence policy decisions and ensure that the government's policies were in line with environment protection. The new social movement theory emphasizes the role of non-government organizations in shaping social environment especially in raising awareness of the environmental and health risks posed by plastic waste.

### **Overview Environment Non-Government Organization in Indonesia**

Environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia take on a variety of responsibilities and activities with the goal of increasing awareness, influencing legislation, implementing conservation methods, and supporting sustainable development. Environmental issues are closely related to the existence of collective actions and solutions raised to environmental problems that occur. Collective action on environmental issues was built by environmental activists from various organizations that are members of the Indonesia Zero Waste Alliance (AZWI). AZWI consists of ECOTON, Nexus3 Foundation and Walhi which often raises the issue of waste imports as a threatening issue and needs attention from the public and policy makers regarding the impact of waste import. These groups carry out research to gain a better understanding of the local ecological situation and its difficulties. They also run lobbying initiatives to raise public awareness and influence environmental policy decisions.

There are several strategies that can be considered and can be used by NGOs such as strengthening advocacy and communication, building strategic partnerships, engaging with policymakers, legal advocacy and litigation, and also monitoring and reporting. One of Environmental Non-Government Organizations's example is Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) which was found in 1980, WALHI is the largest and oldest environmental advocacy NGOs in Indonesia and It unites more than 479 NGOs and 156 individuals throughout Indonesia's vast archipelago, with independent offices and grassroots constituencies in 27 of the nation's 31 provinces ([www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org), n.d.).

As Indonesia deals with its environmental difficulties the role of non-government organizations (NGOs) remains critical in fostering an ideal balance between conservation efforts and socioeconomic development. Moreover, environmental non-organizations (NGOs) have made substantial contributions to Indonesia's sustainable development. These organizations empower local communities to actively participate in conservation efforts and sustainable resource management through community-based projects.

### **Strengthening Advocacy and Communication**

Environment non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia are rising social movement that is critical to boosting environmental activism and communication. They affect policies and decisions through advocacy, while excellent communication. They affect policies and decisions through advocacy, while excellent communication improves public knowledge and support. According to the study by the Indonesia Center for Environment Law, Indonesia legal framework for trade has many loopholes so that exporters can take advantage of it to import their waste into Indonesia ([CNNIndonesia.com](http://CNNIndonesia.com), 2019). In addition, the importance of importing

plastic waste that enters it is always checked, especially to avoid types of waste that can not be recycled or have absolutely no economic value.

NGOs were able to pressure the government to take action and were successful in framing the issue of plastic wastes as non-military threat to Indonesia's national security by using a variety of tactics, including demonstrations, media campaigns and legal challenges. Advocacy is a key function of Indonesian Environmental Non-Government Organizations. Environment NGOs work to influence policies, laws, and decisions at the local, and state level of government. They identify environmental concerns, assess their implications, and provide evidence-based policy recommendations through research, data collection and analysis.



Figure.1 Environmental Activist Protest in Front of The US Consulate General, Surabaya

Sources: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190712174254-20-411673/protes-sampah-impor-massa-di-jatim-geruduk-konjen-amerika>

Environment NGOs play an important role in communication. They use numerous channels to promote awareness about environmental concerns, engage the public, and foster a sense of environmental responsibility such as social media, campaigns, and public events (Mubarak & Alam, 2012). The effective communication contributes to a better knowledge of complicated environmental issues, foster public support, and mobilizes citizens to participate in environmental projects. The research also highlights to the importance of public awareness campaigns in promoting environmental protection and health of Indonesia citizens.

The researcher analyzes that the entry of illegal waste into Indonesia was responded by environmental NGOs with collective actions carried out in the form of a 'zero waste' campaign and speeches made by environmental NGOs, ECOTON and others are in front of the United States Consulate General, Surabaya. The Environmental NGOs also call Indonesia's government to ensure that the illegally imported waste have been re-exported to the origin's countries in accordance with the regulation concerning the provisions for the import of hazardous and non-toxic waste as industrial raw materials.

### **Building Strategic Partnerships**

NGOs worked with other non-state actors to raise awareness of the problems of plastic waste and to develop solutions. Building collaboration is a significant strategy used by Environmental NGOs to increase their effect. They frequently collaborate with other non-governmental groups, governmental agencies, academic institutions, and international

organizations to pool resources, share expertise, and handle environmental concerns collectively. The partnerships activities enable non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to tap into varied viewpoints and information, facilitating the creation of complete solutions to complicated challenges. Building strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts allow these NGOs to maximize their effect by using the skills and resources of multiple stakeholders.

Collaborating with academic institutions and research groups can give non-governmental organizations access to in-depth studies and assessments on the environmental, economic, and social implications of plastic waste re-export. This scientific evidence will help their advocacy efforts. Moreover, Environmental NGOs can work at the grassroots level to educate and empower people about the issue of plastic waste re-export. Empowered communities can become advocates for themselves, putting pressure on local governments to act.

### **Engaging With Policymakers**

Environmental Non-government organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia play an important role in engaging policymakers on environmental issues, notably in the context of plastic waste management. The issue of re-exporting plastic waste is particularly important because of the environment, social, and economic consequences. Article 19 of the 1982 Basic Environmental Management Act explicitly acknowledges NGOs as active players in the nation's conservation efforts to solve the environment's problems (Colombijn, 1998). Based on their research and analysis, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should put forward well-thought-out policy suggestions to solve the issue of re-exporting plastic waste. The ideas should be actionable, practical, and evidence-based. NGOs can suggest solutions such as investing in domestic recycling infrastructure, enacting stronger limits on waste plastic imports, or encouraging industry to reduce their use of plastic. So Environment NGOs can engage with the policymakers.

Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) do research to collect data and evidence on environmental challenges. They use the research to produce policy suggestions and provide feedback to government agencies and officials. NGOs can play an important role in filling gaps by undertaking research to aid policy formation, improving institutional capacity, and facilitating independent conversation with civil society to assist people live more sustainable lifestyles (Mubarak & Alam, 2012).

### **Legal Advocacy and Litigation**

Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) use legal advocacy and litigation to influence policy design and execution around the re-export of plastic waste. The rising environmental issues caused by plastic waste, as well as the critical need for sustainable waste management techniques, have pushed these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to play an active role in establishing legislation through legal means.

Legal advocacy is a complex technique that environmental NGOs can use to influence legislative decisions about re-exporting plastic waste. These organizations cooperate closely with legal professionals to do extensive research that results in detailed publications that highlight the serious environmental, health, and social effects of re-exporting plastic waste. This increased knowledge puts significant pressure on policymakers to adopt more environmentally responsible policies.

When normal advocacy approaches fail to create sufficient alterations to legislation, environmental no-governmental organizations (NGOs) turn to legal action as an alternate strategy. This entails initiating legal action against governmental or commercial institutions in charge of plastic waste disposal and campaigning for policy changes. In such legal processes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) frequently claim that existing policies encouraging plastic waste re-export violate domestic environmental laws, international agreements, or human rights principles.

Environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace Indonesia and WALHI have emerged as important champions in the context of Indonesia's policy landscape surrounding the re-export of plastic waste materials. These non-governmental organizations have conducted comprehensive research studies into the environmental, economic, and social consequences of plastic waste re-export. Their research findings serve as the foundation for their legal advocacy efforts allowing them to launch effective public awareness campaigns and organize public rallies emphasizing the importance of legislative reform.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

Environmental NGOs have remained engaged in ensuring the successful execution of the re-export policy after the policy was established. Based on an investigation by Ecological Observation and Wet Conservation (ECOTON), the content of dangerous imported plastic waste in containers can reach 35% (Tempo.co, 2019). The increasing piles of imported waste can indirectly increase the amounts of hazardous substances that impact the environment. Moreover In Indonesia, field investigations identified illegal recycling activities and crime syndicates, open burning, water contamination, crop death, and an increase in illness linked to environmental degradation, prompting citizens to complain and governments to enforce restrictions to protect their borders (Russell, 2020). They monitor how were being followed, reported any transgressions, and promoted an open reporting process. Following the implementation of policies, NGOs should assess their effectiveness and impact. WAHLI, an Environmental NGOs, assesses that waste management in Indonesia is still poor, only about 40% of regions in Indonesia have a waste transportation system (Bayu, 2019). This information can be used to provide feedback to politicians, analyze the effectiveness of implemented initiatives, and suggest additional improvements if necessary.

NGOs were able to influence the conversation surrounding the plastic waste issue by persistent involvement with legislator, government officials, and other pertinent stakeholders. Environment NGOs came to the Executive and Legislative parliament to protest against importing illegal waste. The executive and legislative parliament have responded by reporting illegal waste to the general of customs and excise. The general of customs and excise has an important influence in supervising the import trade in waste. The effort of general of customs and excise is to re-export waste that are not accordance with the provisions of Indonesia's regulation. The role of Environment NGOs as new social movement is important to anticipate non-military threats.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the theory of new social movement and the discussions, this research delved into the multifaceted role of environmental NGOs in shaping Indonesia's policy on re-exporting plastic waste. Additionally, social movements can be powerful tools for change. When well-organized and supported, they can bring attention to critical issues such as plastic waste management. The engagement of the public in these movements can create a collective voice that demands action, potentially influencing government policies.

Findings underscored that environmental NGOs were not mere observers or commentators. Through the mobilization of social movements, these organizations can influence public opinion and put pressure on policymakers to address the environmental challenges associated with plastic waste. Environment NGOs actively engaged with policymakers, industries, and the public to advocate for policy changes. By influencing policy formulation, facilitating policy implementation, building public awareness, and leveraging strategic networks, these NGOs effectively contribute to addressing non-military threats posed by plastic waste.

NGOs may act as advocates, bridge builders and facilitators of social movements, influencing policies that balance economic interests with environmental sustainability. Their actions highlight the potential of civil society to impact policy and address complex environmental challenges. Policymakers and stakeholders should recognize and support the vital role of environmental NGOs in achieving sustainable solutions for a better future. The success of such policies may depend on the collaborative efforts of NGOs, government bodies, industries, and the public in addressing the complex challenges posed by plastic waste.

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