

# IMPLEMENTATION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF ACEH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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**Abstract:** This study examines the implementation of good governance principles in the Provincial Government of Aceh, a region with unique post-conflict dynamics and special autonomy. Using a mixed-methods design that integrates qualitative interviews with officials, civil society actors, and community leaders alongside quantitative surveys, the research explores three key dimensions: transparency, accountability, and public participation. Findings reveal persistent challenges, including limited citizen access to policy information, weak participatory mechanisms, and recurring corruption cases that undermine institutional integrity. At the same time, promising opportunities emerge through digital innovations in public service delivery and growing collaboration between government and civil society. These developments demonstrate the potential of technology and inclusive governance practices to enhance transparency, rebuild trust, and foster sustainable development. The study contributes to the limited literature on governance in Aceh by offering an integrated analysis of both challenges and reform prospects. Recommendations emphasize comprehensive bureaucratic reform, capacity building, and participatory policymaking as critical steps for strengthening governance in post-conflict and autonomous regions.

**Keywords:** good governance, accountability, transparency, Aceh, public participation

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi prinsip-prinsip tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik (good governance) di Pemerintah Provinsi Aceh, sebuah daerah dengan dinamika pascakonflik dan status otonomi khusus. Dengan menggunakan desain metode campuran yang mengintegrasikan wawancara kualitatif dengan pejabat pemerintah, aktor masyarakat sipil, serta tokoh masyarakat, dan dilengkapi survei kuantitatif, penelitian ini menyoroti tiga dimensi utama: transparansi, akuntabilitas, dan partisipasi publik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan masih adanya tantangan signifikan, antara lain keterbatasan akses masyarakat terhadap informasi kebijakan, lemahnya mekanisme partisipatif, serta kasus korupsi yang berulang sehingga melemahkan integritas institusi. Namun demikian, terdapat peluang positif melalui inovasi digital dalam pelayanan publik dan kolaborasi yang semakin meningkat antara pemerintah dan masyarakat sipil. Perkembangan ini menunjukkan potensi teknologi dan tata kelola inklusif dalam meningkatkan transparansi, membangun kembali kepercayaan, dan mendorong pembangunan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada literatur yang masih terbatas tentang tata kelola di Aceh dengan memberikan analisis terpadu mengenai tantangan dan prospek reformasi. Rekomendasi yang diajukan menekankan pentingnya reformasi birokrasi, penguatan kapasitas aparatur, serta pengambilan kebijakan partisipatif untuk memperkuat tata kelola pemerintahan di wilayah pascakonflik dan berstatus otonomi khusus.

**Kata Kunci:** good governance, akuntabilitas, transparansi, Aceh, partisipasi publik

## Introduction

Good governance represents a multidimensional framework encompassing transparency, accountability, participation, and adherence to the rule of law (UNDP, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. These principles are fundamental for strengthening public trust, ensuring legitimacy of institutions, and fostering sustainable development. Beyond enhancing administrative efficiency, good governance

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). Governance for sustainable development: A framework for action. UNDP.

mitigates corruption, promotes social equity, and supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Khan, 2021; World Bank, 2021)<sup>2</sup>.

Globally, the implementation of good governance has been central to improving public service delivery, strengthening citizen engagement, and enhancing accountability (OECD, 2020)<sup>3</sup>. At the local level, these principles are particularly crucial, as local governments directly interact with citizens in addressing community needs. For regions such as Aceh, Indonesia, which has a distinctive governance trajectory shaped by historical conflict and special autonomy, the application of good governance principles becomes both urgent and complex.

Aceh, located on the northern tip of Sumatra, was granted special autonomy through Law No. 11/2006, providing broader authority in governance and incorporating Islamic law into its institutional framework (BPS, 2022)<sup>4</sup>. This dual system—integrating Islamic principles, local customs (Adat), and administrative structures—presents unique opportunities and challenges. Post-conflict recovery further underscores the need for inclusive governance to rebuild trust, foster social cohesion, and ensure equitable service delivery in areas such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Rahman et al., 2021)<sup>5</sup>.

This study pursues three interrelated objectives: (1) to assess the implementation of good governance principles in Aceh; (2) to identify challenges faced by the provincial government; and (3) to explore opportunities for strengthening governance practices. Preliminary evidence suggests that while progress has been made in institutionalizing transparency and accountability, gaps remain in citizen participation and anti-corruption measures (Indonesian Institute of Sciences, 2021; Aceh Governance Index, 2022)<sup>6</sup>. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, resource constraints, and persistent socio-political tensions further exacerbate governance challenges.

Nevertheless, opportunities exist for improvement. Leveraging digital governance tools, adopting best practices from comparable regions, and enhancing participatory mechanisms can significantly advance governance outcomes (World Bank, 2021)<sup>7</sup>. This research thus contributes to the broader discourse on governance reform in post-conflict and autonomous regions, providing insights and recommendations relevant not only for Aceh but also for other local governments striving to strengthen democratic governance.

## Methods

This study applies a mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative interviews with government officials, civil society actors, and community leaders, alongside quantitative surveys conducted across diverse demographics. This approach ensures both contextual insights and statistical validity, enabling data triangulation to strengthen reliability (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Khan, M. (2021). Good governance and development: A global perspective. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31(2), 215–230.

<sup>3</sup> OECD. (2020). *Governance at a glance 2020*. OECD Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik. (2022). *Statistical yearbook of Aceh province*. BPS.

<sup>5</sup> Rahman, A., Abdullah, S., & Yusuf, R. (2021). Post-conflict governance in Aceh: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 65(8), 1456–1475.

<sup>6</sup> Indonesian Institute of Sciences. (2021). *Governance and public policy in Aceh: Current trends and future directions*. LIPI.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank. (2021). *Digital governance: The future of service delivery*. World Bank Publications.

<sup>8</sup> Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2021). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

The design is appropriate given the multidimensional nature of good governance, which involves accountability, transparency, and participation (Grindle, 2020)<sup>9</sup>. Qualitative data reveal structural and cultural challenges, while quantitative findings measure public perceptions, offering empirical validation (Masykur, 2021)<sup>10</sup>.

Data collection combined purposive sampling for interviews (30 participants) with stratified sampling for surveys, complemented by secondary sources such as government reports and NGO publications (Aceh Provincial Government, 2022)<sup>11</sup>.

Data analysis employed thematic coding for qualitative responses (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and statistical tests using SPSS/R for quantitative data. Findings from both streams were integrated to identify convergences and discrepancies, producing evidence-based recommendations for governance reforms (Flick, 2020)<sup>12</sup>.

## Results And Discussion

Good governance is a cornerstone of sustainable development, particularly in post-conflict regions such as Aceh. The principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and rule of law serve as essential benchmarks for evaluating governance effectiveness. In recent years, Aceh has demonstrated progress in promoting transparency, especially in budget allocation and public service delivery, through the adoption of online platforms that provide public access to financial information (UNDP, 2021)<sup>13</sup>. These initiatives mark an important step toward more open governance. However, significant challenges remain, especially in ensuring accountability and citizen participation. Weak oversight mechanisms have allowed instances of corruption and mismanagement, as seen in the misuse of disaster relief funds where resources failed to reach the intended beneficiaries (Aceh Institute, 2022)<sup>14</sup>.

Citizen engagement presents another area of concern. While participatory forums have been established, public awareness of these platforms remains limited, restricting inclusivity and reinforcing disparities in governance. Marginalized groups, in particular, remain underrepresented in decision-making processes, preventing the development of policies that fully address the diverse needs of Acehnese society (Bappeda Aceh, 2023)<sup>15</sup>. Bureaucratic inefficiencies further exacerbate these issues. A survey indicated that over 60% of respondents experienced significant delays when accessing government services, eroding public trust and weakening institutional legitimacy (BPS Aceh, 2022)<sup>16</sup>.

The socio-political landscape compounds these challenges. The legacy of conflict and entrenched political patronage has fostered clientelism, often prioritizing elite interests over public welfare (LIPI, 2023). This dynamic undermines governance reforms and perpetuates public skepticism. Trust in local government remains fragile, with surveys showing that only 40% of citizens express

<sup>9</sup> Grindle, M. S. (2020). Good governance: The inflation of an idea. *International Journal of Development Issues*, 19(1), 45–63.

<sup>10</sup> Masykur, M. (2021). Local governance in Aceh: Historical context and contemporary challenges. *Indonesian Journal of Political Science*, 16(2), 112–130.

<sup>11</sup> Aceh Provincial Government. (2022). Annual report on governance initiatives. Banda Aceh.

<sup>12</sup> Flick, U. (2020). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP. (2021). *Governance and development in Aceh: Progress and challenges*. United Nations Development Programme.

<sup>14</sup> Aceh Institute. (2022). *Evaluating accountability mechanisms in Aceh: A case study*. Aceh Institute.

<sup>15</sup> Bappeda Aceh. (2023). *Community participation in governance: A report*. Bappeda Aceh.

<sup>16</sup> BPS Aceh. (2022). *Statistical yearbook of Aceh*. Badan Pusat Statistik Aceh.

confidence in governance institutions (Aceh Polling Center, 2023)<sup>17</sup>. Without deliberate efforts to rebuild this trust, governance reforms will face serious limitations.

Despite these constraints, significant opportunities exist. The establishment of independent oversight bodies to monitor public spending could reinforce accountability and curb corruption, as demonstrated in successful cases elsewhere in Indonesia (Bappenas, 2022)<sup>18</sup>. Strengthening collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) offers another pathway to foster inclusive governance. Evidence from Aceh shows that partnerships between government and local NGOs have improved service delivery in rural areas, highlighting the potential of collective action (Aceh NGO Forum, 2022)<sup>19</sup>. In addition, technological innovations present considerable opportunities for reform. Digital platforms, including mobile applications for public complaints, have already facilitated real-time citizen feedback and improved responsiveness (Aceh Digital Initiative, 2023)<sup>20</sup>. Expanding such initiatives could help reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and enhance transparency, effectively bridging the gap between the state and its citizens.

These findings underscore a dual reality: while Aceh has made progress in advancing good governance, critical gaps persist. Transparency reforms have provided a foundation, but accountability and participatory mechanisms lag behind. This mirrors broader trends in post-conflict regions, where governance systems often evolve unevenly and require context-sensitive approaches (World Bank, 2021)<sup>21</sup>. Strengthening accountability, institutionalizing citizen participation, and leveraging technological innovations are crucial steps toward creating a more resilient governance framework.

This study, while comprehensive, is limited by its reliance on secondary data. Future research should prioritize primary data collection through interviews and surveys to capture more nuanced perspectives of citizens and policymakers. Comparative studies with other post-conflict settings would also enrich understanding and provide valuable lessons for Aceh. Nonetheless, this research contributes to the literature by offering an integrated analysis of Aceh's governance landscape, highlighting both achievements and persistent challenges, and identifying opportunities for reform. A critical research gap remains in assessing the long-term impact of governance reforms on socio-economic development, which should be a focus of future studies to inform evidence-based policy.

## Conclusion

The implementation of good governance in Aceh faces persistent challenges yet offers promising opportunities. Transparency and accountability remain weak, with limited public access to policy information (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS] Aceh, 2022)<sup>22</sup> and low civic participation (Kementerian Dalam Negeri, 2021)<sup>23</sup>. Integrity issues persist, as corruption cases involving officials have increased (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi [KPK], 2023)<sup>24</sup>. These challenges underscore the urgency of strengthening institutional capacity and ethical standards.

<sup>17</sup> Aceh Polling Center. (2023). Public trust in government: A survey of Acehnese citizens. Aceh Polling Center.

<sup>18</sup> Bappenas. (2022). Best practices in public financial management. Ministry of National Development Planning.

<sup>19</sup> Aceh NGO Forum. (2022). Collaborative governance: Lessons from Aceh. Aceh NGO Forum.

<sup>20</sup> Aceh Polling Center. (2023). Public trust in government: A survey of Acehnese citizens. Aceh Polling Center.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank. (2021). Governance in post-conflict settings: A global perspective. World Bank Publications.

<sup>22</sup> Badan Pusat Statistik Aceh. (2022). Statistik Aceh 2022. Banda Aceh: BPS.

<sup>23</sup> Kementerian Dalam Negeri. (2021). Report on public participation in decision-making. Jakarta: Kemendagri.

<sup>24</sup> Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi. (2023). Annual report 2022. Jakarta: KPK.

Nevertheless, digital innovations in public services have improved efficiency and satisfaction, signaling progress toward transparency (Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Aceh, 2023)<sup>25</sup>. Strengthening governance is vital for Aceh, given its post-conflict context and diverse society. Transparent and accountable institutions not only build public trust but also foster sustainable economic growth (World Bank, 2021)<sup>26</sup>.

To move forward, Aceh must pursue bureaucratic reform, invest in human resource capacity, enforce reward-and-punishment systems, and expand collaboration with civil society. Sustained monitoring, evaluation, and participatory policymaking will be crucial in ensuring inclusive and effective governance.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

This study is limited by its descriptive scope. Future research should employ mixed-method approaches and comparative analysis across regions to provide deeper insights into governance reform.

#### *Contribution*

By identifying key challenges and opportunities, this study enriches the limited literature on Aceh's governance and provides practical recommendations for policymakers, scholars, and civil society actors.

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