

Global Norms to Local Practices: the Children's Rights Internalization Through UNICEF Assistance in Makassar

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Abstract: This study focused on how UNICEF, as a foreign aid actor, plays a role in supporting the internalizing children's rights norms into local policies and practices in Makassar City. The issue examined stems from the gap between global commitments through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the practices of child protection at the local level. A qualitative case study approach considered for exploring complex experiences, perspectives, and social processes. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with members of the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM) and officials from the Makassar City Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A); supplemented by participatory observation and analysis of official documents such as mayoral regulations, UNICEF reports, and training modules. The thematic analysis results show that the internalization of children's rights norms occurs through three main channels: technical assistance, policy advocacy, and community capacity building. This process follows the Norm Life Cycle pattern while undergoing adaptation through norm localization mechanisms. FAM acts as a norm translator that connects global values with local culture, such as siri and gotong royong. This study contributes theoretically by expanding the discourse on foreign aid as an instrument for norm diffusion, and practically by emphasizing the importance of local ownership in the sustainability of child protection. The findings suggest the need for stronger cultural translation strategies in child protection policies and programs at the regional level.

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INTRODUCTION

Since adopting *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) in 1989, child protection norms have become a universal commitment binding almost all countries worldwide. The CRC emphasizes children's entitlement to protection against violence, exploitation, and discrimination, along with their rights to education, healthcare, and participation in decisions concerning their lives (Liefwaard and Sloth-Nielsen, 2017). As a United Nations agency, UNICEF plays the role of a *norm entrepreneur* in promoting the dissemination and internalization of the CRC in various countries, including Indonesia. However, despite Indonesia having ratified the CRC through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990, its implementation still faces significant challenges (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 1990). UNICEF data (2023) indicates that approximately two out of three children in Indonesia have experienced physical or psychological violence at home, while the prevalence of child marriage remains at 10.82% (BPS and UNICEF, 2022). It highlights the gap between child protection practices on the regional level and global commitments.

Regarding global development, *foreign aid* is often seen as a tool to accelerate economic growth and infrastructure development. However, foreign aid has also been directed toward supporting social development and advancing human rights over the past two decades. For example, UNICEF provides technical assistance through training and the development of child protection modules and plays a role in advocating for more child-friendly local policies. Recent literature emphasizes that the effectiveness of foreign aid in the social sector is highly dependent on the extent to which global norms can be internalized into local policies (Hale, 2020; Maji, Mehrabi and Kandlikar, 2021). Thus, foreign aid is not merely a transfer of financial resources, but also an essential channel for disseminating values, norms, and practices related to child protection.

Indonesia is one of the countries that has received significant support from UNICEF regarding child protection. UNICEF supports national programs such as *the Child-Friendly City* (KLA) initiative, which has been adapted in various regions, including Makassar (Rahiem, 2025). In this city, UNICEF collaborates with the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) and *the Makassar Children's Forum* (FAM) to facilitate the internalization of children's rights norms into local policies, such as the drafting of a *Mayor's Regulation* (*Perwali*) on child protection (Forum Anak Makassar, 2024a). The FAM report (2023a) notes an increase in children's participation in local development planning meetings, as well as strengthened capacity of village officials and schools in preventing gender-based and age-based violence. However, challenges remain, including budget constraints, cultural resistance, and a lack of public understanding of children's rights (UNICEF, 2021a).

The phenomenon in Makassar shows how global norms regarding children's rights are not accepted directly, but rather through a process of adaptation to local values and practices. Within the Norm Life Cycle theory (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), global norms usually undergo stages of emergence, diffusion, and internalization. However, Acharya (2004) critiques this model by introducing the concept of norm localization, which refers to how local actors adapt global norms to align with regional identity, values, and practices. Recent studies show that the internalization of children's rights norms in Southeast Asia greatly influences how local actors interpret and negotiate global norms by their cultural realities (Katsumata S. S., 2021; Davies, 2022). Given the city's substantial socio-cultural diversity and living traditional practices, it is relevant to research in Makassar.

UNICEF, in carrying out its activities and assistance in Makassar City, does not directly collaborate with the Makassar City government, but rather implements its objectives and assistance through community institutions such as BAKTI Makassar, or even directly to the Makassar Children's Forum through UNICEF's Youth Partners with specific programs, namely the provision of facilitator workshops. The purpose of these activities is to build community resilience, which will then produce facilitators who can implement similar programs and become agents for disseminating information and values related to children, particularly the fulfillment of children's rights and protection.

This study uses several concepts and theories as a basis for analyzing the objectives of the research, namely, first, the theory of foreign aid, which is classically understood as the flow of resources from a country or international organization to a recipient country for economic,

political, and social development purposes. According to Lancaster (2007), foreign aid is divided into several forms: financial aid in grants and soft loans, technical assistance in capacity building and knowledge transfer, and advocacy aid to influence policies and social norms. In its development, foreign aid has functioned as an instrument of economic growth and a normative means to promote the acceptance of universal values such as democracy, human rights, and child protection (Maji, Mehrabi and Kandlikar, 2021). In Indonesia, UNICEF often assists in training, policy modules, and institutional advocacy, it indicates that the non-material dimension of foreign aid plays a significant role in influencing social change.

The debate over the effectiveness of foreign aid continues. Some literature emphasizes that foreign assistance often fails due to structural dependency, corruption, or weak local institutional capacity (Moyo, 2009). However, recent studies show that the success of aid depends heavily on the political context and the extent to which the norms brought by donors can be internalized by the recipient community (Hale, 2020; van der Veen, 2021). In the issue of child protection, foreign aid's effectiveness is measured not only by quantitative indicators such as a decrease in violence rates, but also by the transformation of values and practices that are more child-friendly in local communities. It makes foreign aid an instrument for the diffusion of norms that requires contextual adaptation so that it does not merely become a temporary project. Therefore, the study of foreign aid in this research is positioned as a framework to examine how UNICEF assistance is not only technical but also normative in shaping child protection governance in Makassar.

Secondly, the Norm Life Cycle theory by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) introduces this theory to explain how international norms develop through three main stages: the first stage is the emergence stage, norms are introduced by norm entrepreneurs such as international organizations or influential countries. Furthermore, the cascade stage describes the process by which norms begin to be adopted by many state and non-state actors through social pressure, diplomacy, and advocacy. The internalization stage is the last stage where norms are taken for granted and embedded in social practices and local policies. In the context of UNICEF in Makassar, this organization acts as a norm entrepreneur that promotes children's rights through advocacy, training, and institutional cooperation. The internalization process is key to sustainability because norms are only effective if accepted as part of local values, not simply imposed from outside.

However, the norm life cycle theory has been criticized for being too linear and ignoring the role of local adaptation. Therefore, to strengthen the foundation for understanding the process of internalizing norms for children's rights fulfillment at the regional level in Makassar, the author also uses Acharya's (2004, 2021) theory of norm localization, which explains the process by which local actors adapt global norms to local practices, identities, and values so that these norms become more acceptable. Recent research indicates that international norms that are successfully internalized typically undergo significant local negotiation and adaptation processes (Katsumata S. S., 2021; Davies, 2022). Regarding child protection in Indonesia, global norms such as the CRC are not directly adopted but adapted to cultural value systems, such as family and indigenous community approaches. Thus, norm localization provides an essential lens for understanding how UNICEF adapts its interventions to the socio-cultural context of Makassar so that children's rights norms can be sustained in the long term.

Integrating these two theories allows for a more comprehensive analysis: the norm life cycle explains the stages of norm diffusion from global to local, while norm localization emphasizes the role of regional actors in transforming norms to suit the context. Empirical studies in Southeast Asia show that the success of children's rights programs depends heavily on collaboration between global actors (such as UNICEF) and local institutions, as well as the ability of international norms to adapt to local social structures (Stubbs, 2021; Setiawan, 2023). This study positions Makassar as a social laboratory to test how these two theories interact: whether UNICEF has successfully promoted the cascade of children's rights norms, and how local communities localize these norms to be internalized.

Finally, the concept of a children's rights framework is rooted in the 1989 CRC. However, this paper does not discuss all CRC norms comprehensively, but focuses on the core principles that are most relevant to the context of Makassar. The are four main principles of the CRC are:

(1) non-discrimination, (2) the best interests of the child, (3) the right to life, survival, and development, and (4) the right to participate (respect for the views of the child). Of these four, this study found that children's right to participation is the most prominent norm, followed by the principle of protection from violence and the best interests of the child as reflected in child-friendly policies. As a key institution in the formulation of the CRC, UNICEF has become a leading global actor in ensuring the implementation of these norms at the national and local levels. UNICEF not only fulfills the role of a donor, but also acts as a norm entrepreneur by facilitating policy dialogue, building the capacity of local actors, and strengthening children's participation in decision-making (UNICEF, 2023). In the Indonesian context, UNICEF supports the Child-Friendly City program, a concrete instrument for implementing the CRC at the local level. Thus, the children's rights framework provides both a normative basis and practical guidelines for measuring the success of internalizing child protection norms in Makassar.

Previous research shows that the success of internalizing children's rights depends on the collaboration between international norms and local policies. A study by Davies (2022) in Southeast Asia shows that children's rights norms tend to be more accepted when linked to community values such as mutual assistance and family solidarity. In Indonesia, Setiawan (2023) found that UNICEF advocacy programs are effective when they involve local actors such as children's forums and customary institutions.

Although there have been several studies on UNICEF in Indonesia, most have focused on evaluating programs based on macro indicators such as school participation rates, child marriage prevalence, or violence cases (UNICEF and Bappenas, 2021; Hastira and Maksum, 2024; Pratiwi, 2024). Few studies specifically explore how foreign aid functions as a channel for the diffusion of norms and how these norms are adapted in the local context. Previous research has also rarely highlighted how communities, families, and regional actors play a role in internalizing children's rights norms. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a *gap* in the literature on foreign aid, particularly in linking the debate on the effectiveness of foreign assistance with the dynamics of *norm diffusion* and *local adaptation* at the city level. Makassar was chosen as a case study to understand how UNICEF, as a foreign aid actor, facilitates the internalization of children's rights norms. The research focuses on the patterns of foreign aid provided by UNICEF, including technical assistance, policy advocacy, institutional strengthening, and how local actors adapt global norms to local social and cultural values.

Therefore, this study maps indicators of norm internalization by referring to three main theoretical frameworks. From the perspective of foreign aid, internalization is measured through UNICEF assistance in the form of technical training, policy advocacy, and community capacity building. In the Norm Life Cycle framework, the indicators include the emergence stage through CRC socialization, the cascade stage through local regulations and institutions, and the internalization stage in everyday social practices. Meanwhile, the theory of norm localization is used to see the extent to which CRC norms are adapted to local cultural values, such as *siri'* and *gotong royong*. The normative substance studied refers to the framework of child protection in the CRC, particularly the rights to participation, protection from violence, and the best interests of the child. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide input for local governments, UNICEF, and civil society organizations in designing more sustainable and contextually appropriate child protection strategies. By highlighting the experience of Makassar, this study can also enrich understanding of how international norms such as the CRC can genuinely come to life and have meaning at the community level, rather than merely remaining formal commitments in policy documents.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative case study approach is used aims gain an understanding of how UNICEF, as a foreign aid actor, internalizes child rights norms into local policies and practices in Makassar, particularly through the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM) program and collaboration with the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring complex experiences, perspectives, and social processes (Creswell and Poth, 2018), while case studies allow for analyzing normative phenomena in specific contexts. Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with members of the Makassar Children's Forum and DP3A officials, and supplemented with analysis of official documents such as Mayor's Regulations, UNICEF reports, training modules, and CSR reports.

This study involved five informants consisting of three members of the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM), one FAM facilitator, and one official from the Makassar City DP3A who were interviewed between March 26 and 29, 2025 (Table 1). Informants were selected purposively, considering their direct involvement in UNICEF-facilitated child rights internalization programs and their relevance to the research focus. This selection allowed researchers to obtain diverse perspectives from key actors, both at the child participant and local government levels, so that the data collected was more comprehensive for understanding the process of adapting norms and practices for fulfilling children's rights at the local level.

Data analysis in this study used thematic analysis with six stages according to Braun and Clarke (2021). First, familiarization was carried out through repeated reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and official documents to understand the context as a whole. Second, initial coding assigned codes to relevant data fragments related to the role of foreign aid, adaptation of norms, and internalization of values. Third, searching for themes grouped codes into broader categories. Fourth, reviewing themes ensured that the themes were consistent with the data. Fifth, defining and naming themes defines and names themes to reflect the substance of the findings. Finally, the writing up stage presents the analysis results in narrative form with supporting data quotations. This process allows researchers to discover patterns and deeper meanings regarding the mechanisms of internalizing children's rights norms in Makassar through the interaction between UNICEF and local actors.. Data were manually coded, while validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources, member checking, and peer debriefing (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Thus, this study produces an empirical understanding of the internalization of children's rights and enriches the literature on the role of foreign aid in the diffusion of international norms (Quennerstedt, Robinson and l'Anson, 2021; UNICEF, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Internalization of International Norms on Children's Rights in Makassar City

The policies governing the fulfillment and protection of children's rights in Makassar City are significantly influenced by the internalization of norms about the fulfillment of children's rights derived from international conventions, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the context of this study, the term global norms refers to the main principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that are most relevant to Makassar, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and the right to child participation. Of these four principles, child participation is the most prominent norm, as reflected in the existence of the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM), which actively voices aspirations in the *Musrenbang*. The principle of protection is also evident in the DP3A policy and training facilitated by UNICEF to prevent violence and discriminatory practices against children. Meanwhile, the principles of best interests and the right to development are reflected in the advocacy for child-friendly policies and community capacity building. Thus, the discussion of "CRC norms" in this study is specifically directed at the dimensions of participation, protection, and the best interests of the child, which are adapted through technical assistance, advocacy, and community capacity building. This influence manifests through the following phenomena:

A. Dimensions of UNICEF Assistance and the Process of Internalization of Children's Rights Norms

Research findings indicate that UNICEF assistance in Makassar is predominantly technical assistance and advocacy rather than financial support. UNICEF provides training modules and technical guidance to the DP3A and the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM). A DP3A source emphasized,

"Training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the important strategies... As of the time of the interview, the training had been conducted three times, targeting the village level, schools, and community institutions." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

This quote shows how UNICEF equips local actors with continuous normative understanding. Thus, UNICEF's assistance pattern is more oriented towards institutional

capacity building and knowledge transfer rather than simply providing funds, in line with modern foreign aid trends emphasizing social capacity building (Balán, Dodyk and Puente, 2022). Furthermore, An interview with a DP3A official mentioned three CRC training sessions, which is in line with the UNICEF report (2023) that confirms an increase in the capacity of village and school officials in understanding the principles of children's rights. Field observations also support this, as seen from village officials who have started using training modules in community forums, as well as teachers who integrate children's participation issues into school activities. This combination of interview data, documents, and observations shows that the training did not stop at the level of formality, but was truly internalized in institutional practice.

Beyond technical aspects, UNICEF's support is also evident through resource support that strengthens the Children's Forum in implementing its programs. FAM operates several clusters, one of which is a child participation campaign involving collecting thousands of letters of aspiration. A FAM facilitator explained,

"The first cluster focuses on child participation by collecting a thousand letters of aspirations to be submitted to the Mayor." (Ad, personal communication, March 29, 2025).

In addition, FAM also implements literacy eradication and anti-smoking education programs. UNICEF supports these efforts by providing relevant networks and public campaign materials, ensuring schools and communities accept the programs. A UNICEF report (2023) noted that more than 70% of children in Makassar, that members of the Children's Forum, feel facilitated to express their opinions in campaign activities. This support strengthens the Children's Forum's position as a social agent that promotes children's rights in the public sphere.

Internalizing norms can be mapped through the Norm Life Cycle framework (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Prather, 2020; Wiener, 2021). At the norm emergence stage, UNICEF collaborated with DP3A to introduce the principles of the CRC and the value of child participation through training and socialization. A DP3A informant explained,

"In the macro context, children's rights values derived from international conventions are sought to be incorporated into national regulations and local policies." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

This finding confirms UNICEF's role as a norm entrepreneur, encouraging local actors to absorb international values into the policy framework.

The norm cascade stage is evident when the Makassar City Government adopted child protection norms into local regulations. Regulation No. 2 of 2017 and the vision "*Jagai Anak Ta*" are evidence of norm institutionalization (Forum Anak Makassar, 2023a, 2024a). A DP3A source added,

"Every program that supports this vision is budgeted through the Musrenbang, so that all government agencies must include activities that strengthen child inclusivity." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

According to the interview, we can see the Consistency between regulatory adoption and actual practice is also evident from cross-source data. Regulation No. 2/2017, which affirms the vision of "*Jagai Anak Ta*", is not only recorded in legal documents but also observed in the Children's Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang Anak), where children express their aspirations directly through the Family Assistance Mechanism (FAM). This is reinforced by the Makassar Children's Forum (2023a, 2024a) report, which documents an increase in children's involvement in the development planning process. Thus, regulations, reports, and field practices mutually confirm the sustainability of norm diffusion. The norms initially introduced by UNICEF spread through formal regulatory channels, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and schools implementing additional curricula on children's rights and anti-bullying. Thus, child protection norms experienced cross-sectoral diffusion, marking a norm cascade that transcended formal regulations (Prather, 2020).

The internalization stage is evident in the daily practices of families and communities. A member of the Children's Forum shared,

"Now, when there is a family event, I am asked for my opinion; before, I never was." (Sab, personal communication, March 28, 2025).

The experience of one member of the Children's Forum, who stated that he began to be asked for his opinion within his family, shows a change in the pattern of interaction, where children are beginning to be seen as parties who can contribute to decision-making. This finding is not intended to generalize the experiences of all children, but rather to serve as an empirical illustration that is in line with the Deputy for the Fulfillment of Children's Rights and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia (2023) report, which notes that more than 70% of children in Makassar feel they have a channel for participation through the Children's Forum. Field observations in the Children's Development Planning Meeting and community campaigns also show that some children have the space to express their aspirations. This excerpt reflects early indications of a shift in the position of children from objects to subjects in certain contexts, although the level of internalization varies among families and communities.. A DP3A source added,

"The Makassar Children's Forum has been established across all regions... This structure represents children in the Musrenbang, enabling their aspirations to be advocated up to the city level." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

The statement by DP3A officials that Children's Forums have been established throughout Makassar and represent children in the Musrenbang is in line with the Makassar Children's Forum Performance Report (2024), which notes the existence of forum structures down to the sub-district level and documents their involvement in the village and city Musrenbang. Field observations also show the presence of Children's Forum representatives at Musrenbang, where their aspirations are recorded by the committee. In fact, every year there is a National Children's Day celebration at the city level in Makassar, where children's aspirations are conveyed through *Suara Anak* (Children's Voice), which is documented through *Suara Anak Makassar* and received directly by the mayor every year (Putri and Sari, 2021; Forum Anak Makassar, 2023c, 2024b). This phenomenon shows that the internalization of children's rights norms is beginning to blend with local culture, as emphasized by Wolff (2021).

Therefore, UNICEF's assistance in Makassar has produced a diffusion pathway encompassing technical, resource, and advocacy aspects. This process aligns with the Norm Life Cycle framework, which outlines the stages of emergence, diffusion, and internalization. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the sustainability of children's participation when UNICEF support decreases. A DP3A source acknowledged,

"Parental support often only builds after witnessing the tangible benefits of children's involvement in the organization." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

It reinforces the view that norm diffusion does not stop at regulation but requires a sustained social process at the community level (Acharya, 2004, 2011, 2021; Quennerstedt, 2022; UNICEF, 2023).

B. Local Adaptation and Theoretical Discourse on Foreign Aid as Norm Diffusion

The internalization process of children's rights in Makassar proves the relevance of Acharya's (2004, 2021) norm localization theory, as global norms are not automatically adopted but adapted through a local cultural framework. The Makassar Children's Forum (FAM) is a norm translator connecting UNICEF with the community. A FAM official explained,

"The Makassar Children's Forum has two main functions: as a pioneer and reporter. We fulfill our pioneering function through work programs divided into 10 clusters." (If, personal communication, March 28, 2025).

This statement shows the role of FAM as a translator of norms is not only evident in interviews, but also reflected in the FAM Performance Report (2024a), which details the division of labor into 10 clusters, including literacy and anti-smoking campaigns. Field observations also reveal this practice, for example, the collection of thousands of letters of aspiration led directly by children. Thus, interviews, official documents, and observational evidence reinforce that FAM's function is not merely rhetoric, but is implemented in real programs. Thus, children's rights are not perceived as foreign concepts but as part of social practices familiar to the Makassar community. This finding aligns with Yilmaz's (2022) perspective, which emphasizes that the success of norm diffusion in the Global South is primarily determined by the capacity of local actors to engage in normative adaptation.

From the perspective of foreign aid studies, this research shows that foreign aid now goes beyond the economic dimension and shifts to the social and normative dimensions. In the context of Makassar, UNICEF provides financial support and functions as an advocacy agent and technical facilitator. As emphasized by DP3A officials,

"Training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the important strategies... As of the time of the interview, the training had been conducted three times." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

DP3A's claim regarding CRC training is consistent with UNICEF's (2021a) records documenting the frequency and coverage of training at the community level. Observations during outreach activities also show that UNICEF modules are used directly in discussions with village officials and school teachers. This triangulation shows that UNICEF's technical assistance has a real impact on improving local capacity, not just administrative activities. It is in line with literature highlighting the paradigm shift in foreign aid from an economic focus to social development (Balán, Dodyk and Puente, 2022). Thus, the effectiveness of assistance is not solely measured by the amount of funds, but by the extent to which the norms and values promoted can take root in community practices, in contrast to criticism that international assistance tends to create dependency (Moyo, 2009).

The results of this study also emphasize the importance of the norm cascade stage in the Norm Life Cycle framework (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Hariyadi, 2021; Abdullah and Hastira, 2023). Child protection norms in Makassar are introduced and institutionalized through formal regulations. As stated by an informant from DP3A,

"Every program supporting this vision is budgeted through the Musrenbang process, ensuring that all government agencies include activities that strengthen children's inclusion." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

It shows how international norms have successfully been institutionalized in local government systems. However, as criticized by Checkel (Prather, 2020), policy adoption does not always mean complete internalization. Community involvement is still needed to integrate norms into everyday social practices, rather than merely serving as formal instruments.

Compared to other studies, this research offers a new perspective. UNICEF (2021a, 2021b), in its study in Central Java, emphasizes the dominance of formal regulations as the foundation of Child Friendly Cities. However, this study shows that regulations without cultural adaptation are insufficient to bring about behavioral change. The Children's Forum in Makassar integrates local values such as siri (self-respect) and gotong royong (cooperation) into child participation campaigns. It is emphasized by a member of the Children's Forum,

"Anti-smoking campaigns, literacy, and child participation are the main focus of our working cluster." (Al, personal communication, March 28, 2025).

The integration of *siri'* and *gotong royong* values in the FAM campaign is also reflected in the Makassar Children's Forum report (2023b), which emphasizes that children's participation is more readily accepted by the community when it is linked to local values. This was also observed in *gotong royong* activities with parents in the literacy campaign, where children were given the space to take the lead. By connecting interviews, documents, and observation results, it is clear that norm localization is not just a theoretical concept, but occurs through social practices rooted in Makassar culture. Unlike the case in the Philippines, which shows obstacles to norm diffusion due to local political patronage (Alampay, 2022), in Makassar, the success of diffusion is determined by collaboration between UNICEF, DP3A, and the Children's Forum. This difference emphasizes that the local context is crucial in determining the direction and quality of norm internalization.

However, this study also identified challenges regarding family support and program sustainability. A DP3A official stated,

"Parental support often only develops after they see the tangible benefits of their children's involvement in the organization." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

This finding shows that the success of internalization depends not only on regulations or donor support, but also on the acceptance of the family as the first social institution for children. Without family support, children's participation tends to be limited to the formal level. Therefore, sustainability strategies must emphasize local ownership through family and community involvement, in line with Acharya's (2021) view that global norms will only survive if they are embedded in local identities.

Theoretically, this study broadens the horizon of international relations by positioning foreign aid as an instrument of norm diffusion. UNICEF assistance in Makassar serves to bring together three frameworks: foreign aid as a technical facilitator, the Norm Life Cycle as a diffusion channel, and norm localization as a space for cultural adaptation. DP3A emphasizes,

"The Makassar Children's Forum has been established throughout the region... Children are represented in the Musrenbang with this structure, so their aspirations can be fought for at the city level." (Ij, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

This demonstrates that the internalization of children's rights is supported by foreign aid and local agents capable of articulating global norms in language and practices relevant to the community. Thus, the case of Makassar confirms that the success of norm internalization is highly determined by local socio-cultural dynamics (Wolff, 2021; Yilmaz, 2022), while also affirming that foreign aid can serve as a normative dialogue arena between the global and local, rather than merely a one-way transfer.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the internalization of children's rights norms in Makassar did not occur linearly, but through a process of adaptation to local values such as *siri'* and *gotong royong*. UNICEF played a role not only as a financial donor, but also as a technical and advocacy facilitator that strengthened the capacity of DP3A and the Makassar Children's Forum (FAM). The process of norm diffusion took place through training, policy advocacy, and community capacity building, which gradually changed the local government and community's perspective on children's rights. Theoretically, these findings confirm Acharya's (2004, 2021) criticism that the Norm Life Cycle cannot be understood as a linear process from emergence to internalization. The Makassar case shows that without localization, global norms such as the CRC are difficult to root in social life. Thus, this study enriches the Norm Life Cycle literature by adding empirical evidence that the success of norm internalization is largely determined by the process of cultural translation and local ownership.

Furthermore, this study expands the discourse on foreign aid by positioning UNICEF not only as a funder but also as a normative agent that bridges the dialogue between global values and local realities. This shows that the effectiveness of foreign aid in the social sector is determined more by the extent to which global norms can be culturally translated and accepted by local actors, rather than simply by the amount of resources provided. The practical implication of these findings is the need for local governments and international partners to emphasize cultural translation strategies so that children's rights norms are more sustainable. The involvement of FAM as a translator of norms, as well as the support of families and communities, are key factors in ensuring that children's rights are not only present in regulations but also alive in everyday practice. By highlighting the dynamics in Makassar, this study contributes to international relations theory by better accommodating the role of local actors in the process of norm diffusion, while also providing relevant policy recommendations for child protection at the local level.

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