

Vivat International and Its Mission for Humanity and Social Transformation in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines the role of VIVAT International in championing humanitarian and environmental causes in Indonesia. It aims to highlight the transformative and religious character of this NGO in the pursuit of social change, while identifying its vision, mission, objectives, areas of focus, and operational reach within Indonesia. Data and information were gathered through document analysis and in-depth interviews, while analysis employed a qualitative approach, linking the collected data—derived from documents, media reports, and interviews—with the study's theoretical framework. The findings reveal VIVAT International as a transformative NGO that identifies and analyzes the structures and systems responsible for social and environmental issues, such as mining, geothermal projects, violence against women and children, the rights of indigenous peoples (particularly in Papua and Flores), and human trafficking. The study demonstrates that these issues stem from economic, social, political, and cultural systems and structures that are inherently exploitative and repressive, perpetuating poverty and environmental destruction. Through awareness-raising, advocacy, and empowerment, VIVAT supports affected communities in challenging oppressive systems and structures at both grassroots and national levels, while also amplifying the voices of the voiceless at the United Nations. All these efforts are undertaken in the spirit of a faith-based NGO dedicated to upholding human dignity and the integrity of creation.

Keywords: NGO, transformative, religious, advocacy, empowerment

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in championing humanitarian causes and environmental protection has long been recognized and acknowledged by the United Nations and in the countries where these

organizations operate. Some of these NGOs work at the international level, others at both national and international levels, and some across all three—local, national, and international—each with its own distinct character and areas of

concern.

One of the many faith-based NGOs worldwide is VIVAT International (hereinafter referred to as VIVAT). Established in Rome, Italy, in 2000, the organization was founded with the aim of promoting and defending human dignity—specifically the human rights of marginalized groups (migrant workers, women and children, indigenous peoples, victims of human trafficking, and the poor)—and the integrity of creation (ecology). One strategy to enhance the effectiveness of its work has been the establishment of branches in various countries, including Indonesia, to bridge the interests of grassroots (local) communities with the international level, particularly the United Nations.

As an NGO, VIVAT has now been in existence for over 25 years, with its Indonesian branch, VIVAT Indonesia, marking its 18th anniversary. Throughout this time, VIVAT has engaged in various initiatives—both independently and through multi-stakeholder collaborations and networks—to champion the well-being of communities across different countries, including Indonesia. Despite this, its activities have not yet been sufficiently explored from a scholarly perspective. To date, there is a lack of academic research—spanning various disciplines and viewpoints—regarding this organization, even though it has been an active advocate in Indonesia since the early 21st century. Recognizing this gap, the author is motivated to conduct a scholarly study of VIVAT International's work in Indonesia through the lens of the sociology of religion. Furthermore, given that no specific study of the Indonesian branch has previously been undertaken, it is deemed both important and urgent to conduct a scholarly analysis of VIVAT's specific role in humanitarian efforts and social transformation within the country.

1.2 Research Questions

The main research question of this study is: How does VIVAT International undertake its mission of humanity and social transformation in Indonesia? Among other NGOs, what type of NGO is VIVAT? What characterizes it as faith-based NGO? What concrete work and areas of

concerns does VIVAT take for its mission in Indonesia? What efforts are being made to enhance the effectiveness of its mission in Indonesia? These are the key questions this study seeks to answer.

1.3 Objectives and Significance of the Study

This paper aims to examine the mission and activities of VIVAT International for humanity and social transformation in Indonesia. More specifically, it provides an overview of VIVAT as a faith-based and transformative NGO. Furthermore, the paper seeks to explain the nature and implementation of VIVAT's humanitarian and social transformation mission in Indonesia. Finally, the paper highlights the efforts VIVAT has undertaken to enhance its humanitarian work in the Indonesia.

This study is expected to yield both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it is expected to illustrate how the role of faith-based NGOs reinforces findings from earlier studies regarding religion or religious NGO as a driver of social change and progress. Practically, the study aims to help improve VIVAT's performance in its mission for humanity and the planet earth at local, national, and international levels.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted—both nationally and internationally—regarding the roles and activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Regarding NGO activities in Indonesia, Mansour Fakhri's work, *Masyarakat Sipil Untuk Transformasi Sosial* (Civil Society for Social Transformation, 2004), offers an insightful analysis. The book explores the ideological upheavals and the dynamics of the NGO movement in Indonesia from the 1970s through the 1990s. According to Fakhri, Indonesian NGOs face a dilemma in fully championing marginalized groups, as their existence and sustainability rely heavily on foreign funding. He categorizes NGOs into three types: first, conformist NGOs, which are oriented toward securing government projects; second, reformist NGOs, which view social issues as stemming from the low quality of human

resources—implying that improving human resource quality is essential for achieving social change; and third, transformative NGOs, which perceive the root causes of social problems as lying within oppressive social structures and systems, arguing that social change can only occur if these structures are overhauled and replaced with new, equitable ones.

A comprehensive evaluation of NGOs in Indonesia was conducted by Megan McGlynn Scanlon and Tuti Alawiyah in 2015. According to them, Indonesian NGOs generally form part of civil society—a vast and growing sector of non-governmental groups through which citizens organize themselves to pursue shared goals, interests, or values in public life. Civil society organizations provide a space for citizens to challenge the power of the state and the market by advocating for social and economic justice and by addressing social development needs that the state and market fail—or are unable—to meet. Membership in civil society organizations is voluntary, and these organizations are self-governing, with any surpluses reinvested into the organization. The category of NGOs encompasses community-based organizations that operate at the local level and rely on membership contributions; these organizations possess organizational structures of varying complexity, depend on paid or volunteer staff, maintain a minimum staffing level and financial base, focus on serving others through direct service provision, and engage in community organizing and/or advocacy (Scanlon and Alawiyah, 2015).

In 2018, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) conducted an assessment of the activities of NGOs in Indonesia. The objective was to gain an overview of NGO operations within the context of Indonesian civil society. After gathering data and information from various individuals and institutions, the agency identified the following facts: first, Indonesian law provides a robust foundation and a generally unconstrained environment for NGO operations—covering aspects ranging from legal status and the freedom to form partnerships to the availability and viability of funding (NGOs in Indonesia are regulated by

Law No. 17 of 2013 concerning Civil Society Organizations/CSOs); second, decentralization has created opportunities for NGOs to operate at the provincial, regency, and village levels, leading to the proliferation of local-based organizations across the country and a significant shift in NGO focus toward issues and functions related to local governance and service delivery; third, regarding organizational aspects, common challenges faced by Indonesian NGOs include limited funding, inefficient organizational management, a lack of technical expertise, reliance on charismatic individual leaders, low accountability, and weak financial management; fourth, in some cases, the lack of internal strength within NGOs is offset by strong networks among the organizations themselves; fifth, the prevailing perception among the government, private sector, media, and the public is that while NGOs are effective at advocating for issues and mobilizing the community, many still lack necessary management and technical skills; sixth, most stakeholders believe that NGOs can and should play a specific, beneficial role in enhancing Indonesia's development and governance; and seventh, the weaknesses of CSOs perceived by external groups mirror the weaknesses identified by the CSOs themselves, including limited technical and management capacity (USAID, 2018).

The general work of NGOs at the international level, especially at the UN, can be found in a number of references. Among them is a study by Kerstin Martens on NGOs at the UN. This book reveals how NGOs have changed their interactions with the UN since the mid-1990s. In addition, it also looks at how they represent at the UN, their consultative status and their characteristics affect their relationship with the UN. Case studies include some of the best-known players on the international scene, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, CARE International and Oxfam International ((Martens, 2005). This study pictures and contributes to the broader understanding of the NGOs at the UN in general, but it does not specifically describe the existence and role of religious or faith-based NGOs at that international organization (UN).

Fiona McGaughey's study (2021) illustrates that NGOs have become important, if sometimes overlooked, actors in international human rights law. Although NGOs are generally not subject to binding treaties, they use the UN human rights system to hold governments accountable. The main way is to use the State reporting mechanism (Quadrennial Report), complemented by the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), where NGOs provide information and contribute to developing recommendations. NGOs also lobby for new treaties/conventions, contribute to the drafting of these treaties, and take individual complaints to UN human rights bodies. This study contributes specifically to the understanding of how NGOs work at the United Nations, especially on human rights mechanisms, which is relevant to the work of VIVAT International.

Also a study by Nicola Banks, David Hulme, and Michael Edwards (2015) raises serious questions about the ability of NGOs to achieve long-term transformative goals in their efforts for development and social justice. The three explore how this could be done, given the weak roots of NGOs in civil society and the rising tide of technocracy sweeping the world of foreign aid. This study shows that most NGOs are still in a weak position to influence and encourage real social change. However, this study also argues that NGOs can leverage their traditional strengths to build bridges between grassroots organizations and structures and processes at local and national levels, by applying their knowledge of the local context to strengthen their role in empowerment and social transformation.

Another study about faith-based NGOs at the United Nations was done by Julia Berger (2010). In this study she finds that faith-based NGOs and faith-based NGO groups have joined the UN since the organization's inception. She shows that over the last sixty years, the relationship between religious actors and the UN has evolved significantly – and this has been shaped by dramatic changes in geopolitical realities and climate change that have increased the tenacity of faith-based NGOs and faith-based NGO groups to make their voices heard in social debates.

Berger's study, which is also based on her experience of involvement in the field as a Senior Researcher at the Bahá'í International Community Office - a faith-based NGO which has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) (2004-present) - tries to contribute two important concepts in the study. These are: (a) discussion of the concept of 'religious' NGOs and 'faith-based NGOs'; and (b) about how these concepts operate at the UN.

Jeremy Carrette and Hugh Miall in their 2017 study of faith-based NGOs at the UN explain how religious groups, operating as NGOs, are involved in the most important global institution for world peace, namely the UN. It shows what processes they adopt and whether there is a "spiritual" UN today. This book is the first interdisciplinary study to present the results of extensive fieldwork examining the activities of religious groups at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Based on a three-and-a-half year study of activities within the United Nations system, they seek to show how "religion" operates in both visible and invisible ways Carrette and Miall, 2017).

Next, Claudia Baumgart-Ochse and Klaus Dieter Wolf examine the involvement of religious NGOs at the UN and explore whether they polarize political debate at the UN or facilitate agreement on policy issues. The number of Fb-NGOs involved with the United Nations (UN) has increased rapidly in recent years: Fb-NGOs maintain relationships with various UN agencies, member state missions, and other NGOs, and participate in UN conferences and events. This study includes a quantitative review of Fb-NGOs at the UN and a qualitative analysis of specific policy issues such as international development, climate change, business and human rights Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2020). This study is viewed relevant to this effort of understanding VIVAT's role as a religious NGO at the United Nations.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

To build a framework for thinking, an understanding of VIVAT as an NGO, especially as a faith-based NGO, needs to be put forward. From all the studies above on NGOs, two

conceptual frame-work would be employed in this study, namely Mansour Fakhri's differentiation of three types of NGOs and Julia Berger's concept of "religious/faith-based NGOs."

2.2.1 Definition of NGO

The term NGO is an adaptation of the English language Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). NGOs generally describe groups that act independently of any government. The term was coined by the United Nations (UN) in 1945 to differentiate between government agencies and private organizations, and is relatively modern. NGOs are usually formed by private citizens with a specific mission or service, and they use their platforms to advocate in the nonprofit sector (Civil Liberties Union for Europe, n. d.). This study adopts Bernard Korten's definition of NGO as "a nonprofit, voluntary citizen group that operates independently of any government." (Korten, 2024).

2.2.2 Types of NGOs

David Korten (1987: 519-539) categorized NGOs based on the development program

strategies they employed, identifying three distinct generations. The first generation comprises relief and welfare-oriented groups—such as Save the Children, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision—that provide welfare services to impoverished communities worldwide. The second generation consists of small-scale, local, self-reliant NGOs that emerged as a reaction to the first generation; while their activities often parallel those of the government, they arose due to the state's inability to extend services to rural villages. The third generation focuses on sustainable development, addressing fundamental issues regarding sustainability concepts, the scope of impact, and recurring cost recovery. Korten did not prioritize the concept of an alternative development paradigm; instead, he focused on management functions and the methodologies behind NGO activists' efforts to articulate the interests of grassroots communities.

From the mapping of the NGO paradigm according to David Korten above, Mansour Fakhri then divided the political positions of NGOs into

three types, namely conformist, reformist and transformative types. The first type are NGOs which carry out their work based on a charitable paradigm, namely those who are project-oriented and work organizationally by adapting to existing systems and structures. Basically, the main motivation for their programs and activities is to help the community with good intentions to help those in need (Fakhri, 2004: 519-539).

The second type is reformist NGOs. This type is based on the ideology of modernization and developmentalism and emphasizes community participation in development. They place various social problems on the government as the main cause of society's backwardness, but they also support developmentalism. The main aim of this view is to change the approach from a top-down to a bottom-up approach; and from a non-participatory approach to a participatory and self-help (autonomous) approach. This is the dominant perspective among NGOs. They do not question and challenge social and political structures that oppress and marginalize, but rather focus on how society can participate more in development for broader social change ((Fakhri, 2004: 519-539).

The transformative type is the third model of NGOs. This type is an alternative to the two previous approaches, which questions structures and systems in society that tend to marginalize or oppress people and tries to change them by developing human productive and creative potentials. This method allows people to control the production of their own information and ideology. This approach is usually found among NGOs working on environmental issues and the rights of indigenous and other marginalized communities. The spirit of countering capitalist hegemony is clearly demonstrated by this type of NGO through the media it creates. This is translated through actions and programs in the form of campaigns and advocacy to defend and support poor farmers, indigenous people and other marginalized groups (Fakhri, 2010: 519-539).

2.2.3 Faith-Based NGO

Before looking at the activities and missions of NGOs, it is important to first understand the concept of faith-based NGOs (Fb-NGOs). This

study will use Julia Berger's analytical framework for defining an Fb-NGO and identifying the dimensions of its identity and activities.

2.2.3.1 Definition of Fb-NGO

Julia Berger defines an Fb-NGO as “a nonprofit organization whose identity and mission are inspired by or based on one or more religious or spiritual traditions” (Berger, 2010: 5). This definition clearly places religious or spiritual traditions as source of inspiration for the work of an NGO. Meanwhile, she defines religion as “a system of beliefs and practices related to the acceptance of a divine, sacred, transcendent reality...” (Berger, 2010: 5). This definition is similar to the one by Emile Durkheim who defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere

to them” Durkheim, 1995: 44). This study adopts the definition of Fb-NGO by Julia Berger to identify VIVAT’s identity and mission, and employees the substantive and functional definition of religion by Emile Durkheim.

2.2.3.2 Dimensions of Fb-NGO

Berger explains and analyzes various dimensions of Fb-NGO identity activities as a framework. This framework refers to the Fb-NGO dimensions outlined by Leon Gordenker and Thomas Weiss (1995: 519-539; Berger, 2010: 7) and Thomas Jeavons' questions to ascertain the religious dimensions of an organization (Jeavons, 1998: 519-539; Berger, 2010: 7). The resulting framework considers four dimensions of “faith-based NGO”: religious, organizational, strategic, and service—and is addressed to all Fb-NGOs, including those associated with the UN. The framework can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Faith-based NGO Analysis Framework

1) Religious Dimension	2) Organizational Dimension	3) Strategic Dimension	4) Service Dimension
1.1. Orientation	2.1. Geographic Range	3.1. Motivation	4.1. Orientation
Bahá'í	Community		Assistance
Buddhist	Sub-national	Mission	Social Service
Christian	National	Single Issue	Education/ information
Hindu	Regional	Multisector	Research
Jainism	Transnational	Social Widespread	Salvation
Islam			Mobilization of opinion
Spiritual	2.2. Representation	3.2. Process	
Multi Religious	Religious	Moral Persuasion	4.2 Geographical Reach
	Denomination	Dialogue	(cf. organizational dimension)

1.2 Pervasiveness	Ecumenical	Information	
Organizational Identity	Spiritual	Modeling	4.3 Beneficiary
Governance	Multi-faith	Advocacy	Member
Membership	Geographic	Monitoring	Non-member
Mission/Service	Political	Spiritual guidance	Combination
Resources			
	2.3 Structure		
1.3 Relationship to Religious Leadership	of Unitary Enterprises		
[Subordinate]	Federation		
[Cooperation]	Confederation		
[Independent]	Autonomy		
	2.4 Resources		
	Member fees		
	Donation		
	Aid funds		
	Government		

Source: Julia Berger, 2010: 6.

The framework depicted in Table 1 seeks to explain some of the 'blind spots' (related to religious entities) inherent in frameworks designed to analyze the overall dimensions of NGOs. The religious dimension explores organizational orientation – the religious affiliation/identity demonstrated by the NGO; pervasiveness (of the religious dimension) – the extent to which religious affiliation shapes an organization's identity and administration. The religious authority dimension addresses the level of authority over Fb-NGOs by each religious leaders.

In relation to the strategic dimension, the element of 'motivation' figures prominently in analyses that reveal – most often in NGO mission statements – the organization's worldview and theological basis for its existence and organizational work. While secular humanitarian NGOs may describe these as relief efforts to alleviate human suffering, similar Fb-NGOs may also do the same in terms such as

'service', 'worship', or 'charisma'. This is also apparent in the analysis of Fb-NGOs' 'processes' (see framework in Table 1 above) – or the means by which they do so to achieve their missions. Many Fb-NGOs view the spread of their ideas in the context of moral suasion or 'spiritual guidance' (Berger, 2010: 8).

The above analytical framework is used in this study as an effort to construct a map to guide researchers through a closer examination of VIVAT, to enable comparisons between VIVAT and various other Fb-NGOs and to identify unique characteristics of this NGO.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach and relies on three main data collection techniques. First, a document review and analysis will be conducted to gather information on VIVAT, covering its vision, mission, structure, focus areas, programs, and humanitarian activities. Reports

from the organization spanning the last few years will also be examined and scrutinized.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with some beneficiaries of VIVAT's programs and activities, including migrant workers who were victims of human trafficking, those affected by geothermal projects, indigenous communities, women and children victims of violence. The same in-depth interviews were held with VIVAT Indonesia administrators and members who serve as the direct extension of VIVAT International in the country, encompassing both central and branch-level administrators as well as JPIC coordinators in Indonesia.

The third method of data collection was focused group discussion (FGD). In this FGD representatives of VIVAT Indonesia's Supervisory Board, Advisory Board and Executive team, and some JPIC Coordinators of VIVAT Member Congregations in Indonesia were included. By using this method, this study expected to gain information on the current situation of VIVAT Indonesia, especially the challenges it faces.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 A Glance at VIVAT International

VIVAT International was founded in Rome, Italy in 2000 as an international NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UNECOSOC) and in association with the Department of Global Communication – DGC (previously Department of Public Information – DPI) of the United Nations ("Milestones, n.d."). It is a coalition of Catholic religious sisters, brothers and priests of twelve Congregations numbering of 25,000 members and working in 120 countries in partnering with lay persons and other NGOs. Those congregations are: SVD (Society of the Divine Word) and SSPS (Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit) as the founding congregations; OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate), CSSp (Congregation of the Holy Spirit), ASC (Congregation of Adorers of Christ's Blood), MCCJI (Comboni Missionaries), MSHR (Sisters Missionary of Holy Rosarie), CMS (Comboni Missionary Sisters), LSA (Little Sisters of the

Assumption), SCJ (Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus), MSCS (Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Boromeo), and CSC (Sisters of the Holy Cross) ("VIVAT Charter", n.d.).

3.1.1 Vision, Mission and Goals

The vision and mission of the organization could be found in its mission statement. The vision statement is as follows: "We, VIVAT International, share a vision of a world where every person is created with goodness and dignity, and hold a firm conviction regarding the equal rights and dignity of all people, ethnic groups, and cultures" ("Vision and Mission", n.d.).

Meanwhile, VIVAT mission is to advance human rights, sustainable development, and the alleviation of various forms of poverty; promote gender equality and protect biodiversity; and foster a global society where people of all backgrounds, cultures, social classes, and religions can experience justice and harmony, and achieve mutual understanding ("Vision and Mission", n.d.).

Furthermore, VIVAT's objectives are to engage in advocacy and lobbying regarding issues of human rights, justice, and peace at the United Nations; to bring grassroots experiences and insights to the attention of others, particularly within the United Nations framework; to raise awareness of these issues among VIVAT members by sharing and disseminating information; and to foster connections for networking and collaboration with various agencies and NGOs ("Vision and Mission:", n.d.).

3.1.2 VIVAT's Principles

VIVAT operates based on some principles such as: collaboration, networking and partnership; defending and promoting life and dignity; inclusion and participation; and sustainability.

3.1.2.1 Collaboration, networking and partnership

In terms of collaboration, networking and partnership, VIVAT itself is a coalition of twelve catholic religious congregations as mentioned above. Other individuals, groups, or organizations may be recognized by or affiliated with VIVAT International in so far as they are related to the

above congregations and upon the recommendation of the competent authority of the respective congregations “Who We Are”, n.d.).

At international/global level, VIVAT is part of some UN NGO committees and working groups to address issues at the grassroots and national levels. Those Committees are: NGO Committee on Stop Trafficking in Persons—CSTIP (“NGOCSTP”, n.d.); NGO Committee on Migration (NGOCMigration”, n.d.); NGO Committee on the Status of Women (“NGOCSW”, n.d.); NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (“NGOCRIP”, n.d.); NGO Committee on Social Development (“NGOCSocD”, n.d.); and NGO Committee on Financing for Development (“NGOCFFD”, n.d.). Meanwhile, together with Franciscans International, VIVAT has also initiated the formation of NGO Mining working group (MWG) at the UN which is now a coalition of 18 UN NGOs (“miningWG”, n.d.) and NGO Working Group to End Homelessness (“NGOWGEH”, n.d.). Finally, in response to the UN 2030 Agenda (SDGs), VIVAT joined one of the NGO Major Groups, focusing on water and sanitation issue (SDG 6) (UNMajorGroups, n.d.). By forming NGO committees, working groups and NGO major group, civil society organizations at the UN can focus on specific issues and gather data and information from grassroots for the purpose of sharing and advocating at the UN.

At national level, VIVAT Indonesia is a collaborative entity: it is a coalition of four Catholic religious congregations—SVD, SSPs, OMI and SCJ working in Indonesia (Yayasan VIVAT Indonesia, 2018: 5). It also works and networks with JPIC coordinators of local churches (Dioceses) and many other entities on certain issues such as extractive industries and geothermal projects. For trafficking issue, VIVAT Indonesia has initiated a network called Zero Trafficking Network (ZTN). It is a coalition and collaboration of 34 NGOs in Indonesia including journalists, academicians, NGOs, religious leaders and youth network (“ZTN”, n.d.).

3.1.2.2 Defending and Promoting Life and dignity
Above all principles, VIVAT preserves life and

dignity. This principle is manifested in its name “VIVAT”, which means “may it live”, which expresses the deep wish for all that exists: “may s/he live, may all persons live, may all creation live.” (“Who We Are”, n.d.). This is also manifested in its vision: “Sharing a vision of the world and every human being as created in goodness and dignity and believing, defending and proactively supporting the equality in rights and the dignity of all individuals, peoples, and cultures. This is reiterated in VIVAT’s slogan “Together for life, dignity and rights” in which VIVAT members, along with its co-workers and partners promote, protect, and respect life in fullness for all people and creation, work to restore the dignity of each human person through the human rights approach (“Slogan”, n.d.).

3.1.2.3 Inclusion and participation

In point three of its Vision it is stated that VIVAT “strives towards creating a world society and local communities that encourage the inclusion and participation of all.” (“Vision and Mission”, n.d.). This is along with UN SDGs slogan: “No one is left behind,” which means that every person from any background should be taken into account and involved in the process of idea generation, planning, and enjoying the fruits of development, as well as in efforts to protect human life and dignity.

3.1.2.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is one of the other principles advocated and promoted by VIVAT. This is reflected in the formulation of its mission, especially points 2 and 3 which state:

1. Work with persons and groups who live in poverty of any kind and share in their efforts to restore and preserve well-being, dignity, and freedom.
2. Promote human rights, promote sustainable development, understanding, and harmony between peoples, cultures, classes, religions, and beliefs; strive towards creating a world society and local communities that encourage the inclusion and participation of all.
3. Work for ecological sustainability, the protection of biodiversity, and the preservation of

the planet's richness for future generations ("Vision and Mission", n.d.).

Together with the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared by the UN in 2000 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) declared by the UN in 2015, VIVAT has continuously expressed its serious commitment since its establishment in 2000 to be one of the driving forces at all levels to advocate for the sustainability and survival of both humanity and all creation in this world.

3.1.3 VIVAT's Organizational Structure

VIVAT is an international organization with its headquarter located in Rome, Italy. Both Advisory Board and Board of Trustees together with executive secretary and contact persons reside in Rome, while the executive co-directors live in New York City, U.S. to represent the organization at the UN main headquarter and VIVAT representative resides in Geneva, Switzerland also to represent the organization at the UN headquarter.

Meanwhile, VIVAT International has established branches in several countries, including Indonesia. These branches aim to expand the organization's influence and reach at both national and local levels. To date, there are seven VIVAT branches worldwide: Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Kenya, Belgium, Argentina, and Bolivia. Additionally, "national groups" have been formed in a number of countries; these represent collaborative efforts among members of the congregations that are part of VIVAT International. Such groups exist in the USA, Mexico, Nigeria, Ghana, Spain, Ireland, and Brazil ("National Offices", n.d.).

Indonesia has been an official branch of VIVAT International since August 21, 2008, although it was formally ratified by the VIVAT Board in Rome in 2010. Currently, VIVAT Indonesia comprises four Catholic religious congregations: SVD (4 provinces), SSPS (5 provinces), OMI, and SCJ. Its operational scope covers both Indonesia and Timor-Leste. VIVAT Indonesia subsequently established the VIVAT Indonesia Foundation to secure legal recognition from the Indonesian government; the foundation's deed of establishment was most recently updated on

August 1, 2018 (Yayasan VIVAT Indonesia, 2018).

3.2 VIVAT International as a Transformative Faith-based NGO

This study identifies VIVAT International as a faith based NGO, in which it has all the dimensions characterizing a religious NGO in Julia Berger's typology: it is a nonprofit organization; its identity and mission are inspired by/based on Arnold Janssen's religious and spiritual tradition as reflected in its name "VIVAT" (Tottapilly, McHugh, and Sanchez (eds.), 2009, 18), which is derived from the Latin verb "VIVERE," meaning "to LIVE," and expresses the deep wish for all that exists: "may s/he live, may all persons live, may all creation live." ("Vision and Mission", n.d.).

Using Julia Berger's four dimensional typology--religious dimension, organizational dimension, strategic dimension, and service dimension, this study tries to identify the characteristics of VIVAT as a faith-based NGO. First, from religious dimension, VIVAT's orientation is Christian (Roman Catholic) with a spiritual character. Its pervasiveness is reflected in its organizational identity, governance, membership and mission/service and resources. VIVAT has a clear organizational identity, that is, it is an NGO founded by 2 Catholic religious Congregations and consists of 12 member congregations as mentioned before; it also has a clear organizational structure, leadership structure both at board level and executive level; at global and national levels. Its mission is for the sustainability of humanity and the planet earth and its (human, financial and other) resources are mainly from the contribution of each member congregations and other resources. Finally, its relationship to religious leadership is subordinate, in that, it is responsible to the board of directors, whose president is the general superior of the founding congregations and whose members are the general superiors of the member congregations. It also shows a cooperation among member congregations both at board level, executive level (in New York and Geneva) and branch (national) level ("VIVAT Charter", n.d.).

Second, from organizational dimension, VIVAT is a transnational organization with its branches and

national groups at national level. It is transnational because it was founded by two international religious congregations in Rome—SVD and SSps—supporting by 10 other Catholic Religious Congregations working worldwide. According to the statistics of VIVAT International, these international religious congregations have a total number of more than 17,000 members, working in 120 countries (“Who We Are”, n.d.). It represents religious, spiritual and political aspects of a faith based organization. Its structure is of unitary enterprises, in which this organization operates based on its charter with some subsidiary unitary enterprises at national levels (e.g. Indonesia, Philippines, India, Kenya, Belgium, and others). VIVAT resources include member fees, donation and aid funds (“VIVAT Charter”, n.d.).

The third, from strategic dimension which includes the elements of ‘motivation’ and ‘process’, VIVAT’s ‘motivation’ element reveals in its mission statements as follows:

- 1) Work with persons and groups who live in poverty of any kind and share in their efforts to restore and preserve well-being, dignity, and freedom.
- 2) Promote human rights, promote sustainable development, understanding, and harmony between peoples, cultures, classes, religions, and beliefs; strive towards creating a world society and local communities that encourage the inclusion and participation of all.
- 3) Work for ecological sustainability, the protection of biodiversity, and the preservation of the planet’s richness for future generations (“Vision and Mission”, n.d.).

This mission statements is VIVAT's worldview and theological basis for its existence and organizational work. It is done with multisector approach and through moral persuasion, dialog, information, advocacy and monitoring.

Finally, from service dimension, VIVAT’s orientation includes assistance (as short term goal), social service, and education/information/awareness raising which operates mostly at national and local levels, while mobilization of opinion is done both at national and global levels.

This analytical framework is used in this study as an effort to construct a map to guide researchers through a closer examination of VIVAT, to enable comparisons between VIVAT and various other Fb-NGOs and to identify unique characteristics of this NGO. Table 2 below shows the analytical framework to identify VIVAT as a religious NGO.

3.2 VIVAT’s Work for Humanity and Social Transformation in Indonesia

VIVAT International works in Indonesia as a faith-based NGO by bridging local, grassroots missionary work with global human rights advocacy. Founded globally in 2000 by Catholic religious congregations, VIVAT Indonesia operates through a network of priests, sisters, and brothers—chiefly from the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSps)—to protect human dignity, empower marginalized groups, and voice local injustices to the United Nations (Amaral, 2020).

Table 2: Analysis of VIVAT as a Faith-based NGO

1) Religious Dimension	2) Organizational Dimension	3) Strategic Dimension	4) Service Dimension
1.1 Orientation	2.1 Geographic Range	3.1 Motivation	4.1 Orientation
Christian (Catholic)	National	Mission	Assistance
Spiritual	Transnational	Multisector	Social Service
		Social Widespread	Education/information
			Mobilization of opinion
1.2 Pervasiveness	2.2 Representation	3.2 Process	4.2 Geographical

			Reach
Organizational Identity	Religious	Moral Persuasion	national
Governance	Spiritual	Dialogue	transnational
Membership	Political	Information	
Mission/Service		Advocacy	
Resources		Monitoring	
1.3 Relationship to Religious Leadership	2.3 Structure		4.3 Beneficiary
[Subordinate]	of Unitary Enterprises		Member
[Cooperation]			Non-member
			Combination
	2.4 Resources		
	Member fees		
	Donation		
	Aid funds		

Source: processed from various sources

4.3.1 The "Grassroots-to-Global" Model

VIVAT's unique operational style relies heavily on its status as an international organization with Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC ("Who We Are", n.d.). In terms of local data collection, VIVAT members (missionaries) live and work directly within remote or impoverished communities across Indonesian provinces like East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and West Papua (Amaral, 2020; Franciscans International et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, VIVAT is involved in global advocacy. When local communities face human rights violations or ecological damage, VIVAT gathers field data and submits shadow reports or testimonies directly to UN bodies in New York and Geneva (VIVAT International, 2020).

4.3.2 Key Focus Areas in Indonesia

Combating Human Trafficking and Safe Migration. Eastern Indonesia, particularly East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), faces high rates of illegal labor recruitment and human trafficking. VIVAT Indonesia actively runs awareness campaigns, establishes safe houses, and helps rehabilitate victims. They track cases from rural villages and forward testimonies to global forums like the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) to pressure policy changes (Duka, SVD, 2026; Imakulata, 2025; VIVAT International Indonesia, 2018: 519-539; VIVAT International Indonesia,

2019: 519-539; VIVAT International Indonesia, 2020: 519-539; VIVAT International Indonesia, 2021: 519-539; VIVAT International Indonesia, 2022: 519-539; VIVAT International Indonesia, 2024: 1, 3, 519-539, 519-539; Amaral, 2020; and VIVAT International Indonesia, 2025, 2 and 5).

Environmental Justice and Indigenous Rights. Rooted in the Catholic environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'* issued by Pope Francis in 2015, VIVAT fights against aggressive mining and land grabbing that threatens indigenous communities (Ocwa, Cssp, March 2017, 9; VIVAT International, 2017: 4, 6, and 8).

They document how large-scale corporate ventures destroy local ecosystems. They also present statements regarding controversial projects, such as local geothermal ventures impacting local communities, directly to the UN Human Rights Council (Saldanha, SSpS, 2019).

Human Rights in West Papua. VIVAT International and VIVAT Indonesia as a branch regularly collaborate with other faith-based networks (like Franciscans International) to monitor the complex socio-political and human rights situation in West Papua. They participate in joint NGO submissions to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), reporting on civil liberties, violence, and economic marginalization of the indigenous Papuan people (Ocwa, Cssp, 2017: 9; Franciscans International, et al., 2022).

Empowerment and Ending Gender-Based Violence. Working through dedicated crisis centers—such as the TRUK-F humanitarian volunteer team in Maumere, Flores—VIVAT provides legal, psychological, and social assistance to women and girls experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence, and systemic poverty (Ocwa, Cssp, 2017: 9; Franciscans International, et al., 2022).

4.3.3 The Transformative Character of VIVAT's Work in Indonesia

As a transformative NGO, VIVAT demonstrates several fundamental characteristics in its operations within Indonesia. These characteristics center on advocacy, empowerment, raising awareness, collaboration, networking and partnerships, and community building. In its advocacy work, VIVAT prioritizes the interests of grassroots communities—viewing them as active subjects—while adopting a victim-centered perspective. Grassroots communities in Indonesia include victims of human trafficking, migrant workers, farmers affected by mining projects, women and children who are victims of violence, and victims of natural disasters. Grassroots advocacy activities include voicing the interests of affected communities—such as providing support to indigenous peoples facing the expropriation of their land rights by the government or corporations—as well as assisting victims of human trafficking and sexual violence (Amaral, SSps, 2020).

Empowerment efforts focus primarily on economic development and children's education. In various locations, VIVAT Indonesia—as part of VIVAT International—provides economic training, particularly in home economics, for farmers and homemakers, such as the initiatives carried out in Timor. Additionally, scholarship assistance is provided to children affected by the eruption of Mount Lewotobi on Flores Island; this support targets junior and senior high school students as well as university students who are at risk of dropping out because their parents can no longer afford their education (Amaral, SSps, 2020).

Furthermore, to raise awareness among grassroots communities regarding their rights—as well as

among government officials and other societal stakeholders regarding their responsibilities to fulfill the rights of the people they serve—training sessions on human rights and investigative journalism focused on strategic community issues have been conducted in some places in East Nusa Tenggara ((Amaral, SSps, 2020).

In addition, in collaboration with the VIVAT International headquarters in New York and Geneva, VIVAT Indonesia also develops networks, collaborations, and partnerships. Just as at the international level, VIVAT Indonesia maintains close and cordial networking, collaborative, and partnership relationships with numerous parties, including with the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) ministries of various Catholic dioceses, local Christian churches, and secular civil society organizations like Imparsial and AJAR to multiply their impact on the ground ((Amaral, SSps, 2020). To combat human trafficking, VIVAT Indonesia initiated the establishment of the Zero Trafficking Network (ZTN), a coalition of 22 Indonesian NGOs dedicated to addressing this issue. VIVAT also collaborates with the Franciscan Indonesia JPIC—an extension of Franciscans International, an international NGO focused on human rights and the protection of creation. Naturally, broader partnerships are also formed with various other parties, depending on the specific issues addressed through advocacy efforts ((Amaral, SSps, 2020). Agust Duka, SVD, current Director of VIVAT Indonesia, emphasized the importance of this networking, cooperation, and partnership, stating:

We recognize that networking, cooperation, and partnership are essential; without them, we cannot carry out our advocacy and empowerment work to the fullest extent. A particularly significant aspect for us is funding networks; VIVAT Indonesia has secured financial support from international donor agencies to facilitate our work at the grassroots, national, and international levels. “Mensen met een Missie” (MM) is one such funding partner that has greatly assisted us in carrying out our humanitarian and ecological missions in Indonesia over the years (Interview with Agust Duka, SVD, June 15, 2025).

This was also reiterated by Sr. Geno Bikan, SSps, former treasurer of VIVAT Indonesia when she says: “VIVAT can only survive and carry out its mission more effectively if it has strong support from its allies. MM is one of our partners for financial support, without which it is hard to carry out programs that can reach those on the ground” ((Interview with Sr. Geno Bikan, SSps, June 15, 2025). VIVAT Indonesia also actively promotes “VIVAT Ecolife.” VIVAT Eco Life is an initiative and guide for ecological action from VIVAT International that aligns with the goals of *Laudato Si'*—namely, caring for the earth, promoting integral ecology, and fostering ecological conversion through prayer, reflection, and concrete action. Its primary objectives are to cultivate a spirituality of creation and a harmonious relationship with nature; to produce educational materials and pastoral guidelines regarding the environment; and to carry out tangible environmental conservation actions at both the group and national levels. The program comprises a guidebook outlining practical steps for environmental conservation; prayer and reflection resources, such as prayer cards and guides for contemplating the integrity of creation; and concrete actions, specifically community-based activities aimed at upholding ecological justice (“Ecolife and Action”, n.d.). Sr. Geno Amaral, the former director of VIVAT Indonesia states on this: In the spirit of Pope Francis’s Encyclical *Laudato Si* and United Nations’s SDGs agenda, we raise ecological awareness among VIVAT members, our partners, and grassroots communities by promoting and distributing leaflets about VIVAT Ecolife in schools, basic ecclesial communities, families, parishes, and indigenous communities (Interview with Sr. Geno Amaral, June 15, 2025).

4.3.4 VIVAT’S Work in Specific Areas in Indonesia

VIVAT International customizes its human rights and environmental advocacy across Flores, West Papua, and Borneo (Kalimantan) based on the distinct socio-political and economic vulnerabilities of each region. By leveraging local networks of religious missionaries, the organization gathers ground-level data to

challenge corporate and governmental policies.

4.3.4.1 Flores (East Nusa Tenggara)

In Flores, VIVAT’s work heavily balances countering human trafficking with environmental advocacy surrounding renewable energy projects (Amaral, SSps, 2020). The first is advocacy related to the geothermal energy conflict. While the Indonesian government promotes Flores as a “Geothermal Island” to spearhead its green transition, VIVAT highlights how local indigenous communities are rejecting these projects. VIVAT reports that these corporate-led geothermal projects often bypass free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), leading to land grabbing, environmental degradation, and the displacement of local farmers. VIVAT documents these violations to challenge the projects at the UN Human Rights Council level (Rahmat, SVD, 2025).

Another issue is Human Trafficking & Safe Migration. Because Flores suffers from high poverty and systemic underdevelopment, it is a prime target for illegal labor recruiters. VIVAT works through community networks to provide safe houses, support legal prosecutions against traffickers, and educate vulnerable communities about legal migration channels. The last is advocacy in relation to Gender-Based Violence. Partnering with local crisis centers like TRUK-F (Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan Flores – Flores Voluntary Team for Humanity) in Sikka Regency, VIVAT actively rehabilitates victims of domestic and sexual abuse, tracking systemic legal failures to present to international human rights bodies (Amaral, SSps, 2020).

4.3.4.2 West Papua

In West Papua, the focus shifts strictly toward acute human rights monitoring, cultural survival, and documentation of militarization in an unresolved, high-risk political conflict zone. First, socio-political and civilian protection. Working alongside international coalitions like Franciscans International and the International Coalition for Papua (ICP), VIVAT monitors arbitrary arrests, military violence, and restrictions on civil liberties among indigenous Papuans. They provide critical, anonymous ground data for UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) shadow reports,

advocating for open access to West Papua for international journalists and human rights observers (Ocwa, Cssp, 2017: 9; Franciscans International et al., 2022). Deforestation and indigenous displacement is another issue in West Papua. The island holds some of the world's last intact tropical rainforests. VIVAT monitors how large-scale palm oil plantations and mega-agriculture initiatives push indigenous Papuans out of their ancestral lands, disrupting their subsistence lifestyles and erasing their cultural heritage. Finally, VIVAT focuses also on inequality and health issues in West Papua. VIVAT members (missionaries) on the ground document stark economic gaps between indigenous Papuans and trans-migrants, calling international attention to underfunded healthcare and education in remote highland regions (Ocwa, Cssp, 2017: 9; Franciscans International, 2022).

4.3.4.3 Borneo (Kalimantan)

In Kalimantan, VIVAT's mission centers heavily on indigenous Dayak rights and ecological devastation caused by extractive industries. Among them is the impact of the new capital (Nusantara). With the ongoing development of Indonesia's new capital city, Nusantara, in East Kalimantan, VIVAT monitors the socio-ecological shifts. They advocate against the rapid displacement of indigenous communities and the conversion of surrounding ecosystems into urbanized zones without proper community compensation. Another issue is corporate exploitation and deforestation. Decades of aggressive coal mining and massive palm oil expansion have altered Kalimantan's landscape. VIVAT works with local environmental ministries to document the loss of ancestral forests, pollution of major river networks used by Dayak communities, and corporate violations of environmental laws. The last issue is cross-border trafficking. Sharing a massive, porous land border with Malaysia, Kalimantan is a major corridor for undocumented labor and human trafficking. VIVAT networks help identify illegal labor routes and provide legal aid to exploited migrant workers deported or trapped across the border ("We Are Ready?...", n.d.).

4.3.5 Specific Case Studies

The specific case study that VIVAT International and its local missionary partners use to showcase the dark side of Flores' "Geothermal Island" policy centers on the Mataloko Geothermal Project (Ngada Regency), alongside current resistance campaigns in Wae Sano and Poco Leok (Manggarai region) (Rahmat, SVD, 2025; Reiner Simanjuntak [ed.], 2025). Rather than opposing renewable energy conceptually, VIVAT's advocacy focuses on how these projects damage local livelihoods, destroy sacred spaces, and lack community consent. Building on the lessons of Mataloko, VIVAT has expanded its human rights tracking to two active project sites where indigenous communities are resisting geothermal drilling (Simanjuntak, 2025).

4.3.5.1 The Core Case Study: The Mataloko Disaster (Ngada)

The Mataloko plant, initially backed by international funding and operated by the state utility company PLN, serves as VIVAT's primary warning case study. Drilling began directly inside villagers' agricultural gardens and meters away from residential homes. In 2008, a drilling well burst, triggering uncontrollable underground leaks. VIVAT identified the socio-environmental impact of the project. The blowout caused constant hot mudflows and released toxic sulfur fumes. This poisoned the local air, caused severe respiratory infections in children and the elderly, and withered vital cash crops like coffee, maize, and rice. The physical terrain destabilized, causing homes to crack and forcing families to abandon their land. To this negative impact, VIVAT took some ground action. Working in lockstep with the JPIC SVD (Society of the Divine Word) Ende and JPIC of the Archdiocese of Ende, it documented that the state utility company continued pushing for expansion into nearby water sources—like the Tiwu Bala stream—without repairing previous damages or offering transparent environmental impact assessments (Rahmat, 2025).

4.3.5.2 Wae Sano (West Manggarai)

VIVAT's advocacy against geothermal project at Wae Sano, West Manggarai is viewed as related to the potential threat of this project to peoples'

"Ruang Hidup" (livelihood). The government planned drilling points directly within the residential perimeter of the Wae Sano indigenous community. VIVAT, through JPIC SVD Ruteng and local NGOs, highlighted a severe violation of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Crucial project documents and environmental risk assessments were withheld or provided only in English, leaving villagers in the dark. Because of sustained documentation of community resistance by local networks, The World Bank officially pulled its funding from the Wae Sano upstream exploration project ("Babak Baru Proyek Geothermal Wae Sano", 2023).

4.3.5.3 Poco Leok (Manggarai)

As an expansion of the existing Ulumbu geothermal plant, the Poco Leok project has faced massive local backlash. VIVAT has documented that the state deployed police and military forces to escort drilling equipment, leading to the intimidation and harassment of indigenous landowners protesting on their own fields ("Flores geothermal ambitions collide with justice", n.d.). Besides police and military intimidation and repression, VIVAT and its partners identified some geological hazards. Ground data gathered by members VIVAT members and partners emphasizes that Poco Leok is a high-rainfall, steep mountainous zone prone to landslides. Drilling puts the main water springs used by thousands of indigenous farmers at extreme risk of toxic contamination ("Dilema Pembangunan Geothermal di Flores, Manggarai", n.d.; "Rethinking Geothermal Energy in Indonesia", n.d.).

4.3.5.4 Framing Mining and Geothermal Issues Globally

Through the Litmus Test, VIVAT evaluates extractive and geothermal projects based on four pillars: Do No Harm, Poverty Alleviation, Respect for Local Communities as Rights-Holders, and Sustainability (Simanjuntak, 2025). "Do no harm" principle is measured or assessed through four important questions: To what extent can extractive and geothermal project activities be carried out without violating human rights, including the rights to life, health, water, food, right to land and

control over productive resources, right to work, right to self-determination (including free and prior informed consent--FPIC), or cultural life? To what extent can mining and and geothermal project activities be carried out without damaging vital ecosystems or threatening Earth's capacity? Are disadvantaged or marginalized groups particularly vulnerable to these impacts in a way that violates their right to non-discrimination? And, can measures be taken to protect the population from situations that violate human rights which tend to accompany mining and geothermal projects, including landgrabbing, insecurity, and social conflict? (Mining Working Group at the UN, 2018, 5).

The second principle (eradicate root causes of poverty) was assessed by VIVAT members in Indonesia through three important questions: Does the local community enjoy a greater enjoyment of the human rights as a result of the development through this project? Do the positive contributions of the mining and geothermal project activities prioritize the promotion of the human rights among the most disadvantaged or marginalized groups, with a particular attention to possible gender or racial/ethnic biases? Does this extractive or geothermal activity effectively contribute to eradicating poverty? (Mining Working Group at the UN, 2018, 5).

The third principle of Litmus Test--people as rights-holders--was measured through three important questions: Do potentially affected people and communities have sufficient access to information and policy-making spaces, to effectively participate in the process of assessing the extractive and geothermal project activities? Are there conditions that allow affected communities and human rights defenders to fully exercise their rights? Is effective remedy guaranteed if harm does occur? (Mining Working Group at the UN, 2018, 5).

The last principle--sustainability -- was also used to assess the impacts of mining and geothermal project activities on those two islands based on three other questions: What are the effects of potential mining and geothermal activities in the immediate and/or short term? Based on all

available evidence and indication, how will these extractive and geothermal project activities affect the rights of the future generations mid- and long-term? Can uncertainty be overcome in strict adherence to the precautionary principle? (Mining Working Group at the UN, 2018, 5). The results of this assessment show that both mining and geothermal project activities lacked accountability and tended to violate human rights in all its aspects. Therefore, VIVAT as an organization with the local communities rejected these project to operate further on Flores and Lembata Islands. VIVAT members submitted the documented case studies to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and made statements through UPR mechanism and to international climate finance watchdogs to argue that "Green Energy Transitions" must not be built on the violation of human rights and the destruction of indigenous living spaces (Rahmat, SVD, 2025).

5. CHALLENGES NOW AND AHEAD

Throughout its relatively long journey, VIVAT has faced various challenges and difficulties in carrying out its mission for humanity and the planet. In Indonesia specifically, a number of tangible challenges and difficulties have been encountered. During a focus group discussion involving VIVAT Indonesia's board of patrons, supervisors, administrators, and members, five challenges faced by the organization at various levels were identified. First, in general, VIVAT members lack adequate knowledge about the organization and do not yet possess a strong sense of ownership or commitment to it.

Second, coordination among VIVAT's member congregations at the national level remains weak; the JPIC coordinators from each congregation—who serve as liaisons—often neglect communication and information sharing. Furthermore, the patrons of the VIVAT Indonesia Foundation, most of whom have numerous other commitments, have not been sufficiently proactive in advancing VIVAT and its programs at both national and local levels (FGD with VIVAT Indonesia members and Executive Team, June 16, 2026; Interview with Agust Duka, June 15, 2025; Interview with Sr. Geno Amaral, June 15, 2025).

The third challenge is the limited financial support available to fund VIVAT's programs and projects. Although every VIVAT Indonesia member congregation has agreed to contribute financially to support the organization's work through annual dues—and despite assistance from donor agencies such as *Mensen met een Missie*—these funds are insufficient for large-scale activities given Indonesia's vast geographical expanse. While VIVAT Indonesia is still able to conduct certain training sessions and workshops to a limited extent, sustaining long-term advocacy efforts remains difficult (FGD with VIVAT Indonesia members and Executive Team, June 16, 2026; Interview with Agust Duka, June 15, 2025; Interview with Sr. Geno Amaral, June 15, 2025).

A fourth challenge is the lack of professional personnel to carry out VIVAT's mission. Those serving as VIVAT administrators have not been specifically trained for organizational and advocacy work. Furthermore, the limited number of staff makes it impossible to effectively address the various humanitarian and environmental issues that are the organization's focus (FGD with VIVAT Indonesia members and Executive Team, June 16, 2026; Interview with Agust Duka, June 15, 2025; Interview with Sr. Geno Amaral, June 15, 2025).

Finally, challenges also arise from parties who view VIVAT's work as a disruption to their lives and comfort. For instance, when VIVAT handles human trafficking cases, perpetrators attempt to obstruct legal proceedings. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of firm commitment from law enforcement agencies and local governments to take decisive action against human traffickers. Similar challenges arise in the context of environmental advocacy, whether regarding palm oil and mining projects in Kalimantan or mining and geothermal projects on the islands of Flores and Lembata (FGD with VIVAT Indonesia members and Executive Team, June 16, 2026; Interview with Agust Duka, June 15, 2025; Interview with Sr. Geno Amaral, June 15, 2025).

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the entire explanation above, it can be concluded that VIVAT International is a non-

profit civil society organization grounded in Christian faith and spirituality and in consultative status with the ECOSOC of the United Nations. It is a transnational organization with its branches and national groups at national level. Its structure is of unitary enterprises, in which this organization operates based on its charter with some subsidiary unitary enterprises at national levels.

VIVAT has its clear vision, mission and goals for humanity and the planet earth guided by principles such as collaboration, networking and partnership; defending and promoting life and dignity; inclusion and partnership; and sustainability.

In Fakhri's typology of NGOs, VIVAT is categorized as a transformative type of NGO which questions social structures and systems that perpetuate poverty and misery of the poor and marginalized and exclude people (women, children, migrant workers and indigenous peoples, etc.) from their basic human rights. Using Litmus Test, VIVAT examines if development projects (including geothermal projects in Flores) do no harm to the local people, eradicate root causes of poverty, consider people as rights-holder, and take into account sustainability principle.

VIVAT's transformative character is manifested in its advocacy work at grass-roots and national levels as well as at global (UN) levels. It also sets up empowerment programs to raise critical collective consciousness among the marginalized through seminars, trainings and workshops.

VIVAT Indonesia as a branch of VIVAT International has taken serious responsibility in advocating for indigenous people's rights in

Borneo (Kalimantan) and West Papua on the issues of fracking and indigenous peoples' rights, on trafficking in persons, migrant worker's rights and the rights to health and education. Meanwhile, VIVAT focused on defending the rights of local communities and environmental protection in relation to geothermal project operations on Flores and Lembata Island in East Nusa Tenggara Province.

Finally, during these past years VIVAT have been facing some challenges in doing its mission in Indonesia and will probably continue to face the same challenges in the future. Those challenges are lack of adequate knowledge, sense of ownership and commitment among VIVAT members about the organization, lack of coordination among VIVAT's member congregations, limited financial support, lack of professional personnel and challenges from parties who view VIVAT's work as a disruption to their lives and comfort.

While some achievements have been made, VIVAT needs to improve its mission and strengthen its membership, advocacy work and commitment in response to the challenges it faces through coordination and the expansion of collaboration, networking and partnership in the future. Strengthening the grassroots, raising awareness and capacity building, and among VIVAT members through training and workshops also other important efforts both VIVAT International and VIVAT Indonesia should do for the more effective and impactful mission in the future.

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Interview

Amaral, Sr. Geno, SSpS (52), Former Director of VIVAT Indonesia, Interview, Jakarta, June 15, 2025.

Bikan, Sr. Geno SSpS, (54), VIVAT Indonesia's former treasurer, Interview, Jakarta, June, 15, 2025.

Duka, Agust SVD, (60), Director of VIVAT Indonesia (former secretary), Interview, Jakarta, June 15, 2025.

FGD

Focused Group Discussion with VIVAT Indonesia members and Executive Team in Maumere, Flores, NTT, on June 16, 2026.