

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IN OPTIMIZING WAQF LAND REGISTRATION IN GORONTALO REGENCY

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Abstract

Waqf land registration is essential to the governance of socio-religious assets and requires effective cross-sector collaboration. In Gorontalo Regency, a significant gap between recorded and certified waqf lands indicates structural weaknesses in the governance framework. This study evaluates the design of waqf land registration governance using a collaborative governance perspective and proposes an integrative institutional reconstruction to improve certification outcomes. A qualitative policy case study approach was employed, drawing on waqf and land regulations, technical policy documents, and regional administrative data. The analysis was guided by key dimensions of collaborative governance: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative processes. The findings show that although formal authority is clearly defined, governance remains fragmented and largely procedural. The absence of a permanent coordination forum, uneven actor capacities, limited information integration, and weak facilitative leadership constrain the development of sustained collaboration. To address these issues, the study recommends institutionalizing deliberative coordination mechanisms, strengthening participatory capacities, integrating information systems, and embedding collective accountability. The research extends the application of collaborative governance to regionally implemented, religion-based public policies.

Keywords: *Collaborative Governance, Institutional Design, Public Administration, Waqf Land Registration.*

INTRODUCTION

Waqf land registration is a strategic instrument in ensuring legal certainty and the sustainability of the social function of religious assets in Indonesia. From the perspective of Public Administration, the legalization of Waqf land is not only about the formal recording of legal events but also about the governance of public assets grounded in religious values and long-term social interests (Ahyani et al., 2024). Waqf land that has not been certified has the potential to cause ownership disputes, conflicts between heirs, changes in functions that are not in accordance with the purpose of Waqf, and loss of assets due to weak legal protection (Islamy, Ariputri, Soegijanto, & Tanaya, 2023). These conditions indicate that Waqf land registration has interrelated administrative, legal, and social implications, so it cannot be understood solely as a bureaucratic technical procedure (Anwar, 2020).

The national regulatory framework has established a relatively clear mechanism and division of authority in the management of Waqf and land. Land authorities have a mandate to issue certificates as a form of formal legalization, while ministries in charge of Religious Affairs carry out the function of coaching Waqf administration (Dakum, Nurwati, & Yullhaq, 2022). The National Waqf institution plays a role in coaching and supervision, while nazhir and wakif, as non-state actors, hold responsibility for the management and sustainability of Waqf assets (Syarief, 2021). This configuration shows that the Waqf land registry is structurally a multi-factor, multilevel policy that brings together the agrarian and religious regimes in a single administrative process.

Although the distribution of authority has been regulated, policy effectiveness is not determined solely by the clarity of the mandate. In public administration practice, the quality of implementation is highly dependent on governance designs that can integrate roles, align interests, and build consistent coordination mechanisms (Zoni, Mubarok, Saputra, & Darmawan, 2023). Policies involving many actors are at risk of fragmentation if interactions between institutions are not systematically institutionalized. Without adequate integration, each institution tends to perform its functions sectorally according to its internal indicators, so that collective goals are difficult to achieve optimally (HAFIDZ, 2023).

Gorontalo Regency provides a relevant empirical context to understand these dynamics. Data shows that 518 Waqf land plots have been recorded, but only 104 fields have certificates. This significant difference indicates that there are structural obstacles in the legalization process. The gap cannot be fully explained by resource constraints or individual administrative constraints, but rather reflects issues at the level of governance design (Hakimah, Marom, Islamiyati, Musyafah, & Budiman, 2022). The variety of institutional capacities, the community's legal literacy, and the lack of integration of cross-institutional coordination also affect the achievement of certification (Dakum, Nurwati, & Firdaus, 2021). In regions with non-metropolitan characteristics, this complexity increasingly demands adaptive, coordinated governance approaches.

To understand policy issues involving multiple stakeholders, the collaborative governance approach offers a comprehensive analytical framework. Collaborative governance emphasizes that solving complex public issues requires deliberative interaction between state and non-state actors in inclusively designed institutional structures (Dakum et al., 2021). The framework identifies several key dimensions, including initial conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative processes that build trust, commitment, and collective accountability. Thus, the success of a policy is measured not only by compliance with procedures, but also by the quality of relations and coordination among the actors. In the context of Waqf land registration, interdependence between institutions is a structural reality that cannot be avoided (Djumeno & Fauzi, 2022). Land authorities need the support of the Waqf administration to ensure document validity, while nazhirs and wakifs need the state's legitimacy to strengthen asset protection. These interrelationships show that optimizing certification requires integration that goes beyond just administrative communication. Without a clear collaborative architecture, interdependencies can lead to procedural bottlenecks that slow down the process and widen the legalization gap.

Studies on Waqf in Indonesia generally focus on aspects of normative law, asset management, or administrative procedures. Meanwhile, the analysis that treats Waqf land registration as a matter of collaborative governance design at the regional level remains relatively limited. In fact, the quality of institutional architecture largely determines the effectiveness of cross-sectoral policies. Collaborative governance-based evaluation enables the identification of structural weaknesses that are not always apparent through a formal-legal approach. By shifting the focus from mere procedural compliance to Interactor interaction design analysis, this study seeks to fill that void. Based on this background, this article departs from the assumption that the main obstacle to the registration of Waqf land in Gorontalo Regency is the inadequate internalization of collaborative governance principles in the regional governance design. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the governance design of Waqf land registration using the collaborative governance dimension and formulate a more integrative institutional reconstruction to support the optimization of certification. The Research questions were: to what extent has the governance design of the Waqf land registry accommodated the principle of collaborative governance, and how can strengthening the design improve the effectiveness of legalization at the regional level?

Theoretically, this study extends the discourse of collaborative governance by applying it to religious-based policies that involve the interaction between legal norms and social norms. The context of Waqf presents its own dynamics, as it is based on state regulations and rooted in religious values and community beliefs. In practical terms, the results of the study are expected to provide a conceptual basis for improving the governance of Waqf land registration by strengthening cross-agency coordination, integrating Information Systems, and developing collective accountability. Thus, optimization is not only measured by increases in certification numbers, but also by an effort to build a more inclusive, integrated, and value-oriented governance architecture for the public.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, employing a policy case study to evaluate the governance of Waqf land registration in Gorontalo Regency from a collaborative governance perspective. This approach was chosen because the study's purpose was to examine institutional design, patterns of authority distribution, and coordination mechanisms among factors in policy implementation, rather than to examine quantitative causal relationships. Conceptually, the study is evaluative within the framework of Public Administration, assessing the adequacy of the governance architecture based on the principle of collaborative governance. The Data used are secondary data, including regulations related to Waqf and land, technical policy documents, and administrative data on the number of Waqf lands recorded and certified in Gorontalo Regency. The documents are analyzed to identify the configuration of actors, formal authority, and the coordination structure provided for in the policy. The analysis was conducted using collaborative governance dimensions, including starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative process. These four dimensions serve as evaluative instruments to assess the gap between existing design and collaborative governance principles.

The validity of the analysis is maintained through source triangulation, that is, by comparing regulatory substances, administrative data, and relevant academic literature to ensure consistency of interpretation. This approach allows the evaluation to be carried out systematically and in an argumentative manner. Although this study does not involve field interviews, the focus on policy design analysis provides an adequate conceptual foundation for identifying structural barriers to the optimization of Waqf land registration at the regional level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Governance design of Waqf land registry from the perspective of Collaborative Governance and its limitations

From a public administration perspective, governance design determines how policies are implemented, coordinated, and evaluated systemically. Waqf land registration falls within the purview of both the agrarian and religious regimes, so it inherently involves state and non-state actors in a multi-actor, multilevel configuration (Ahyani et al., 2024). The certification process is not only the authority of the land authority, but also requires the involvement of the ministry in charge of Religious Affairs, Waqf institutions, as well as nazhir and wakif, who serve as managers and providers of Waqf (Anwar, 2020). This interdependence theoretically opens up space for the formation of collaborative governance. However, the effectiveness of collaboration is highly dependent on how institutional design regulates relations, distributes responsibilities, and coordinates mechanisms between actors (Makhrus, Ismail, & Makbul, 2025). When analyzed using the collaborative governance framework, the governance design of Waqf land registration in Gorontalo Regency shows limitations in four main dimensions: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative process (Syarief, 2021). In the dimension of starting conditions, capacity inequality between factors affects the quality of interaction. Government institutions have formal legitimacy and relatively well-established administrative resources, while some nazhirs face limitations in understanding land procedures and managing legal documents (Senjiati, Malik, Ridwan, & Irwansyah, 2020). In non-metropolitan areas, variations in people's legal literacy further widen the gap.

This inequality forms relationships that tend to be hierarchical. Instead of being an equal deliberative space, interaction takes place more in line with fulfilling administrative requirements set by state institutions. The participation of non-state actors has not yet fully developed into a substantive contribution in policy planning and evaluation (Islamiyati & Musyafah, 2025). This condition indicates that governance design has not been actively managing capacity differences as part of a collaborative strategy. In the institutional design dimension, the main problem is the lack of institutionalized, permanent coordination forums at the regional level. Regulations govern the division of authority and technical procedures but do not explicitly create deliberative space across institutions with strategic mandates (Anwar, 2020). The coordination that occurs is procedural, following the file flow and administrative stages of each institution. Without a forum that has collective targets and a shared evaluation mechanism, interdependence between factors does not develop into a structured policy synergy (Wulandari, Efendi, & Rukmini, 2025).

These limitations have implications for the weak integration of information. Land and Waqf administration are managed through separate systems, so Document Verification often requires repeated clarification. Data inconsistency increases administrative transaction costs and extends the time required to complete certification (Hakimah et al., 2022). From the perspective of collaborative governance, transparency and information exchange are the foundation of trust formation. When data is fragmented across sectoral spaces, coordination depends on informal communication and individual initiative. The facilitative dimension of leadership has also not been strongly institutionalized. There is no structure formally mandated to coordinate cross-agency collaboration at the district level. Coordination rests more on interpersonal relationships and the commitment of certain officials. Dependence on personal figures makes collaboration continuity vulnerable to job rotation and changes in policy priorities (Nugroho, Doktorlina, & Ali, 2023). Without institutionalized facilitative leadership, administrative barriers tend to be resolved ad hoc and do not result in sustained institutional learning.

In the collaborative process dimension, cross-agency interaction has not been fully designed to build deliberative dialogue, shared commitment, and collective accountability. Performance evaluation is still oriented to administrative output in the form of the number of certificates issued, without indicators that assess the quality of coordination or the intensity of interaction across sectors (Irfany, Ningsih, Hasanah, & Rusydiana, 2023). As a result, the collaboration process does not become an integral part of a formal accountability system. The gap between the 518 registered Waqf land parcels and the 104 certified parcels reflects the cumulative impact of these limitations. This difference shows that the recognition of interdependence between factors has not been followed by Strategic Integration Design (Syarief, 2021). Without collective targets and shared evaluation mechanisms, each institution

tends to work within its own sectoral constraints. Interdependence, which should be a coordinative force, becomes a weak point when it is not orchestrated through a clear collaborative architecture. The predominance of approaches oriented towards procedural compliance further reinforces the trend. The legalization of Waqf land is treated as a series of technical stages that must be fulfilled sequentially, without a common strategy to overcome collective obstacles. Policy design emphasizes the sharing of functions rather than the establishment of shared commitments. As a result, problem-solving is reactive, depends on momentary needs, and is not integrated into medium-term planning. Design limitations are also evident in the weak integration of vertical and horizontal elements. At the vertical level, feedback from the regions on the improvement of central policies has not been systematically structured. At the horizontal level, coordination between agencies at the district level has not been formalized in a collective work pattern based on shared targets. This fragmentation hinders the formation of a network work culture that characterizes collaborative governance.

The trust aspect is also influenced by the design, which has not been transparent and participatory. Waqf, as a religious value-based institution, relies heavily on moral legitimacy. When the registration process is perceived as complicated or slow, trust in the administrative system may decrease. In a collaborative framework, trust is not just the result of social interaction but a product of design that opens up access to information and enables meaningful participation. Conceptually, the governance of Waqf land registration in Gorontalo Regency is at the stage of recognizing interdependence but has not yet reached strategic integration. Collaboration is still instrumental and situational; it has not yet developed into an institutionalized deliberative mechanism. Fragmentation of authority, capacity inequality, weak facilitative leadership, and the absence of indicators of collaborative processes suggest that the foundation of governance is not fully aligned with the principles of collaborative governance. Thus, the obstacle to optimizing certification is not only an administrative technical issue, but a reflection of institutional design that has not managed interdependencies productively. Without revamping the coordination architecture and strengthening collaborative mechanisms, accelerating certification risks will produce only temporary improvements, not sustainable governance transformation.

Reconstruction of Collaborative Governance design for optimization of Waqf land registration

If the main issue of Waqf land registration in Gorontalo Regency stems from a governance design that has not been collaborative, then optimization should be understood as the reconstruction of institutional architecture at the regional implementation level. This reconstruction is not intended to replace the national regulatory framework, but rather to build operational mechanisms that can translate interdependence among factors into a structured collective effort (Ahyani *et al.*, 2024). Within the framework of collaborative governance, reconstruction is directed to strengthen the core tools of collaboration, deliberation space, capacity equality, facilitative leadership, Information Integration, and collective accountability. It is equipped with supporting instruments that maintain policy sustainability and adaptivity (Ruswandi, 2023).

The first Foundation of reconstruction was the establishment of a permanent cross-institutional coordination forum at the district level. The Forum is not a communication channel but a common planning space that produces operational decisions. To avoid becoming symbolic, The Forum needs a mandate, a periodic agenda, a deliberation procedure, and a decision documentation mechanism. The output of the Forum should be a cross-institutional action plan that includes period-based certification targets, specific role distribution, and achievement indicators that enable transparent performance monitoring. With a design like this, coordination does not depend on incidental needs, but rather becomes part of routine governance that builds shared ownership towards optimization goals. The second Foundation is the strengthening of capacity equality as a prerequisite for meaningful participation. The gap in administrative capacity between state institutions and Waqf managers needs to be bridged through assistance, nazhir administrative training, and simplification of access to information on registration requirements and flows. Strengthening this capacity not only serves as a technical intervention but also as a strategy to improve the quality of relations, so that the contribution of non-state actors does not stop at the collection of files but can increase to include involvement in identifying obstacles and formulating solutions. In the context of collaborative governance, this kind of relational equality is important for reducing the hierarchical nature of interactions and strengthening the social legitimacy of policies.

The third Foundation is the institutionalization of facilitative leadership that has legitimacy across sectors. Facilitative leadership is not defined by the dominance of one institution, but rather by the capacity to maintain the rhythm of collaboration, mediate differences of interest, and ensure that forum decisions are implemented consistently. For this reason, a clear coordination structure is needed, both through the appointment of coordinating units and through collective leadership mechanisms responsible for preparing the forum agenda, monitoring the

follow-up of decisions, and lowering implementation barriers to executable solutions. Institutionalizing this role will reduce dependence on individual figures and strengthen the stability of collaboration during job rotation. The fourth Foundation is the integration of Land Information Systems and Waqf administration at the regional level. Data integration is not just digitization; it is the alignment of information bases to reduce repetitive verifications, prevent inconsistencies, and accelerate service flows. The connected system allows tracking file progress, identifying bottlenecks, and providing more accurate service information. In collaborative design, information integration also serves as a trust-building tool by reducing information asymmetry among factors while strengthening process transparency.

The fifth Foundation is the reformulation of accountability to assess collaborative processes rather than just administrative output. Performance indicators should include the consistency of forum meetings, the effectiveness of decision follow-up, the level of nazhir participation, the quality of cross-agency obstacle resolution, and the cohesiveness of data. By incorporating process indicators, collaboration becomes part of an institutional obligation rather than a personal choice. This approach strengthens the governance orientation by assessing the quality of policy orchestration as a condition for achieving the certification output. Beyond these five core tools, reconstruction needs to be equipped with instruments that ensure collaboration is adaptive, incentivized, and able to withstand context fluctuations. One important instrument is aligning institutional incentives. Barriers to collaboration often arise not because of the absence of procedures, but rather because of the lack of institutional drive to work across mandate boundaries. Aligning performance indicators across institutions or recognition mechanisms for collective achievements will place Waqf certification on a common agenda, thereby fostering coordination motivation not only normatively but also structurally.

The next instrument is the standardization of procedures across institutions that remain flexible to the local context. Mutually agreed operational standards help reduce differences in interpretation, clarify service flow, and establish the responsibilities of each actor at each stage. Adaptive standardization allows policies to remain consistent while not ignoring variation in service access and administrative capacity across different villages and sub-districts. Reconstruction also needs to adopt region-based coordination to improve implementation effectiveness. Mapping priority areas based on the number of Waqf lands that have not been certified enables more targeted planning, for example, through focused service scheduling, location-based administrative assistance, or setting achievement targets per region. This approach simplifies resource mobilization and makes collaboration more scalable by aligning with real field needs.

In addition, public transparency mechanisms need to be built in a participatory manner. Providing information on stages, requirements, file status, and estimated time to completion strengthens accountability, increases legitimacy, and encourages community participation. This kind of transparency also serves as an instrument of social control, encouraging institutions to work more responsively without waiting for formal pressures to emerge. Another important instrument is jointly managed policy risk management. Risks such as incomplete documents, overlapping ownership, or differences in historical data need to be mapped and mitigated through agreed procedures across agencies. Risk maps and mitigation protocols will make obstacle handling more preventive, so that problem resolution does not recur in an ad hoc manner. Thus, collaboration does not stop at administrative coordination, but develops into institutional strategies that anticipate problems. The sustainability of collaboration must be ensured by strengthening formal bases and integrating it into the regional governance cycle. Many collaborative initiatives weaken when political attention declines; therefore, the Forum and its mechanisms need to have a binding decision-making foundation and be connected to the regular agenda of local government performance planning and evaluation. This integration ensures that collaboration does not become a temporary project, but part of the local government work system.

To strengthen adaptive capacity, reconstruction also needs to develop knowledge documentation. Good practices, barriers, and problem-solving innovations should be recorded as institutional knowledge that can be replicated. This documentation reinforces collective learning and reduces reliance on personal experience, thereby improving policy quality cumulatively. Strengthening collaborative design can be extended through digital governance approaches that support faster file tracking, progress monitoring, and cross-actor communication. Digitization here is not positioned as a mere substitution for manual processes, but rather as a coordination infrastructure that shortens communication distances, enhances transparency, and improves the accuracy of data-driven decision-making. At the value level, the reconstruction of Waqf land registry governance needs to place Public Administration Ethics as a reference. Waqf is not only an object of legalization but a social mandate rooted in religious values and community beliefs. Therefore, integrity, transparency, and moral responsibility need to be translated into operational principles within the service, including on how information is delivered, how conflicts are

handled, and how accountability is built. This ethical dimension strengthens the legitimacy of policies and maintains public trust. Overall, the reconstruction of collaborative governance design in Gorontalo Regency requires a shift from silo work patterns to network work patterns. With institutionalized collaboration, core tools, and supporting instruments that strengthen incentives, adaptivity, transparency, risk mitigation, and sustainability, Waqf land registry optimization can evolve from a mere administrative target to a governance transformation. Through a more mature architecture, certification not only generates legal certainty but also strengthens inclusive, responsive, and value-oriented public governance over the long term.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the issue of Waqf land registration in Gorontalo Regency is rooted in an institutional architecture that has not been able to manage interdependencies strategically. Although the authority structure has been formally established, the existing governance design has not fully established an institutionalized, adaptive, and goal-oriented collaboration mechanism. Limitations in coordination, facilitative leadership, and information integration affect the non-optimal certification process. Reconstruction based on collaborative governance is a prerequisite for strengthening cross-institutional integration, increasing participatory capacity, and building collective accountability in Waqf management. With a more structured and deliberative Design, Registration optimization not only generates legal certainty but also encourages the formation of more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable public governance.

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