

# **Beyond Massive Promotion of Digital Literacy National Movement and Digital Transformation in Indonesia**

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## ***The urge of Digital Literacy & Digital Transformation***

The addition of 316 million new Internet users, globally marked the exponential increase of 7.3% Internet users during the COVID-19 pandemic (Data Reportal, 2021). In response to that, developing countries are seeking to change the tide by utilising this golden opportunity to be able to compete and advance their economy based on information technology. Indonesia shares characteristics of becoming an important player in global relations. Indonesia is the fastest growing country in terms of internet users with the number of internet users per second quarter of 2020 reaching 73.7 per cent of Indonesia's population. The country is reported to have 202.6 million internet users (Data Reportal, 2021). Importantly, 345.3 million mobile connections have been counted in Indonesia, which far exceed the total population because many people own more than one mobile device. Internet penetration in Indonesia stood at 73.7%, the increase in Internet users was 27 million (+16%) between 2020 and 2021 which is evidence of how the internet has been incorporated well into the daily activities of the population amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although digital transformation can be perceived by turning offline businesses into online, the process of using various digital technologies is important. In Indonesia, the use of virtualization technology, mobile computing, cloud computing, integration of all existing systems in the organization as part of digital transformations has been carried out by corporate companies through their permanent and gradual business development plans. As the main backbone for the transformation, in 2019 the government has completed the national fibre optic cable network through the Palapa Ring project, which connects 90 regencies/cities throughout Indonesia, with 57 service regencies/cities and 33 interconnecting regencies/cities (BAKTI, 2021).

Digital transformation and digital literacy programs complement each other and should be addressed seriously in the various promotional and development efforts. ICT skills are needed to fill the gap and space to improve the national strategic goals. In ASEAN, for example, the demand for ICT skills are extremely high. In Indonesia, projected shortage of 9 million skilled and semi-skilled ICT workers from 2015 to 2030. The digital talent gap in Indonesia is also hampered in the ASEAN context. It is estimated that by 2030, India will have a surplus of 245.3 million digital experts and Indonesia is projected to have a shortage of around 18 million digital experts. ASEAN countries fall shorts of ICT graduates' skill sets to match the industry required. In the advanced economy of Singapore, there is a shortage of skilled workers for cyber security at the middle and senior tiers due to insufficient training programs and entry routes for mid-career professionals (Tan & Tang, 2016).

## ***The Beginning of Massive Promotion of Digital Literacy & Digital Transformation***

In Indonesia, the promotion of digital literacy has emerged as a response to the significant increase in Internet use and social media users for the last decade. Recently, the multi-stakeholder national digital literacy movement, consisting of 100 digital literacy campaign-related communities called “GNLD SIBERKREASI” was also established. The National Movement of Digital Literacy (GNLD) SIBERKREASI, is a programmatically based forum of 108 multi-stakeholder institutional partners (corporate/private, government, CSOs, communities, telecommunications operators, digital platforms, media, academics, digital literacy activists). The massive digital literacy promotion has then since begun in the form of national programs.

In the context of digital transformation, the business sector has led the transformation rapidly by their strategic organisational goals to embrace the information & communication technologies (ICTs) to their corporate plan. When the government proposed to start to incorporate the digital transformation effort into the GNLD SIBERKREASI, the business sector supported the efforts by joining the national movement under the umbrella of GNLD SIBERKREASI.

## ***Beyond the Promotion of Digital Literacy***

However, while digital literacy and digital transformation are important, the level of digital literacy in Indonesia has still agonized. According to the World Wide Web Foundation’s Women’s Rights Online report, only 20% of women have access to the internet across Indonesia, of which only 5% use it to express their views and only 26% can find critical information about their rights. Furthermore, with only 52% of the country’s secondary schools connected to the web, many young women face tremendous barriers to its access (WWW Foundation, 2018).

Indonesian netizens were also named as the most impolite netizens in Southeast Asia based on the 2020 Digital Civility Index (DCI) survey helmed by Microsoft. With Availability, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness used as the main pillars to measure Inclusive Internet Index (EIU, 2021), the country scores within the bottom half of countries. On the Affordability and Readiness aspects, scores low on its competitive environment and low literacy rates. In addition, human rights NGOs emphasize their research on the current state of digital rights and discovered flaws in the context of digital rights fulfilments. Engagemedia (2021) reported on their exploration of the digital rights landscape in Indonesia raised questions on the role of stakeholders in protecting or limiting digital rights. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Networks (SAFEnet, 2021) also assessed the current trends and issues on the fulfilment of digital rights in Indonesia and discover the growing trends of violations of digital rights.

The GNLD SIBERKREASI program itself received critics from activists and scholars, where “the literacy program is supposed to be an empowering program to stimulate critical thinking skills, but instead it risks strengthening the state’s power over its people” (Idris, 2022). Contents of its programs include workshops on how to tackle COVID-19 related hoaxes, information filtering and “wise while online”. Other programs evolved around the digital transformation such as SMEs Go Online and how to utilise marketplaces and online businesses for beginners. These programs are beneficial for some aspects of wealth acquisition through digital platforms but relatively failed in addressing the significant challenges on human rights on the Internet, digital ethics and digital securities. This fact shows that the digital literacy movements in some ways failed to lower the rate of digital rights violations one of the main reasons is lacking digital rights awareness programs in the movement.

There are several policies that strengthened the GNLD SIBERKREASI and its massive movement in Indonesia, such as:

- Law Number 36 of 1999 concerning Telecommunications. This policy emphasis is focused on encouraging the openness of the telecommunications sector, by establishing a more competitive ecosystem and reducing centralized and monopolistic control by the state. This law also explains that telecommunications operations can be carried out by State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN), Regional-Owned Enterprises (BUMD), the private sector, and cooperatives;
- Government Regulation Number 52 of 2000 concerning Telecommunications Operations. According to this regulation, the internet is classified as a multimedia service, including voice over internet protocol (VoIP), internet and intranet, as well as data communication and video conferencing;
- Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (UU ITE). In general, the core policies regulated in the ITE Law are aimed at some of the negative impacts that occur due to the rapid development of global information and communication technology on the economy and trade;
- Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 7 of 2021, related to the priority of village fund allocations that allow Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES) to become telecommunications service providers.

However, from those lists of policies, Law Number 11 of 2008 as amended by Law no. 19 of the 2016 Act, has claimed many victims. According to SAFEnet datasets, there were 24 cases in 2019. Moreover, data from the Directorate of Cyber Criminal Acts of the Indonesian National Police, shows that the number of investigations toward social media accounts always increases each year, from 1,338 in 2017 to 2,552 cases in 2018, then soaring even higher with 3,005 cases in 2019. From the numbers, most cases are investigations involving the humiliation (defamation) of public figures, authorities, and public institutions. The condition of digital rights in Indonesia in terms of Rights to Internet access, the Right to Freedom of Expression, and the Rights to Digital Security according to SAFEnet (2021) is in a repressive condition amid the pandemics.

The number of such cases displays the limitations of digital literacy programs. Although enormous efforts to massively introduce digital literacy through national programs of GNLD SIBERKREASI continue to have a hopeful impact on the digital literacy levelling up, the neglect of digital rights in these programs hypothetically will still impact the continuing aggravation in cases related to digital rights violations. Arguably, educational efforts to incorporate digital rights not only to promote digital rights for target citizens but also to law enforcement officers who are frequently involved in dealing with the cases' processes and penalties on cases related to digital rights violations.

## **The Way Forward**

The National Digital Literacy Movement (GNLD SIBERKREASI) in Indonesia, which was initiated by the government in multi-stakeholder collaboration, has become increasingly massive in recent years. GNLD SIBERKREASI does not only focus on the understanding of Internet communication ethics but also on inspiring digital business potentials. Through this movement, SMEs and digital startups are being encouraged to utilise social media channels and various online platforms to target youth who

are the largest proportion of the population of this archipelagic nation. Although several studies show weaknesses in terms of implementation, this movement is one of the important factors in preparing potential digital market players in Indonesia.

However, integrative efforts to build internet infrastructure and digital platforms should be carefully planned, developed and managed. Digital literacy and digital transformation agendas should include how to empower and assist citizens, with the orientation of a human-centred approach. Such Integration by the convergence of the use of new technology (new media) with old technology (old media). Developing a “hybrid method” that combines online platforms and offline services to support public administration services, education, health, and economic recovery are also encouraged, beyond the digital literacy and transformation programs.

Digital literacy and digital transformation have to be understood as not a “panacea” for improving economic conditions and the better life of citizens. Several research results show that age differences, education level, domicile and gender influence the ability to access knowledge and mastery of digital literacy and embrace digital transformations. Moreover, digital literacy has to focus on critical and ethical thinking skills as well as expertise in navigating information in the digital ecosystem. The ethics and skill-sets in utilising the Internet for economic purposes should also be balanced with the ability to think critically, knowing digital rights such as the right to access information, right to freedom of expression –online, right to be secure while online, not only focusing on the digital economy aspects in harnessing the potential of the Internet and digital platforms for economic goals.

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