International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Concept note: social media learning exchange

**Concept note: social media learning exchange / Jakarta / 24-26 November 2015**

# Introduction

We are living in an increasingly digitally connected world. The invention of the Internet has caused a profound shift in the way we communicate, access information, conduct our work. It has fundamentally changed our economies. It has changed our daily lives and truly shaped modern society. Social media is at the centre of our online obsession – in fact, just over a quarter of the world (26% of the global population) are active social media users.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Use of social media by consumers in Asia Pacific is higher than any other region. The trend has been accelerated in Southeast Asia by the extremely high uptake of mobile phones and their use as social media devices. A few examples to illustrate:

* Indonesia is the world’s fourth-largest Facebook market
* Jakarta is known as the ‘Twitter capital of the world’.
* The Philippines has been declared the “Social Networking Capital of the World”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The most popular location to photograph on Instagram in 2013 was Siam Paragon, the shopping complex in Bangkok. This was ahead of Times Square in New York and Disneyland in California. Suvarnabhumi Airport was listed as the 9th most popular spot to photograph.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Around the globe, and especially Southeast Asia, social media is fundamentally changing how we communicate. It is also changing the humanitarian landscape. Organisations such as the Red Cross Red Crescent can communicate more rapidly and directly with communities and opinion leaders and decision makers. Mobile and web-based technologies have made one-way communication into an interactive two-way dialogue both before, during and after disasters.

As a global network, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is engaging and progressing with the social media trends. Some of the strongest examples of social media for disaster management rests with National Societies in Southeast Asia, such as the Indonesian Red Cross, or Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI). While the levels of knowledge and engagement vary within the wider Movement, there remains a strong potential to learn from each other.

# Proposal

The IFRC is proposing to facilitate a 3-day social media learning exchange. The event would be co-hosted by the Indonesian Red Cross and the IFRC in Jakarta. Other National Societies invited to attend in the region include Timor-Leste, Laos, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. National Societies invited need to demonstrate advanced knowledge and experience in utilizing social media. Additional staff as relevant from the IFRC will also be invited.

# Rationale

## Increasing expression of interest by National Societies

Over the past few years, in general National Societies in Southeast Asia continue to demonstrate a high level of engagement and also request support for social media; they are conducting workshops at the national level and increasingly using Facebook and Twitter. Specific benchmarks include:

* In 2013 the IFRC South-East Asia regional delegation hosted a workshop titled, “social media for resilience”. The workshop provided an overview on the range of skills, needs and interest within the Red Cross Red Crescent network in the region with regards to social media (see the online report through [Storify here](https://storify.com/SM4Resilience/social-media-for-resilience)).
* National Societies demonstrate increasing interest and activity in social media, with requests for further technical support and training. Example: the Cambodian Red Cross established an official Facebook page in 2013, and several trainings to increase the capacity of staff in Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam have also taken place through funding by the Norwegian Red Cross between 2013-2014.

* In early 2015, the IFRC hosted a global social media summit in Washington D.C. to further join efforts and resources, and exchange best practice. While and PMI, PRC was able to attend the summit, several other from the region were interested but unable to attend for various reasons.

## Added value to our work

Enhancing the ability of National Societies to engage in social media presents a number of opportunities and benefits – to communities, National Societies themselves and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement as a whole.

* It allows National Societies and the Movement as a whole to increase our reach, sharing information, particularly important during times of disaster.
* It allows us to capture and raise the voices of the community, voices which may be better brought to the attention of decision-makers and influencers.
* It allows National Societies to increase the visibility of their work they are doing and it strengthen our brand. As visually-drive social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter and Instragram all provide a key opportunity to position ourselves.
* It allows National Societies and specialists within the network to shares knowledge, helping position the Red Cross Red Crescent as leading humanitarian experts and actors.
* Provides an opportunity to gather input from the RCRC youth network to better integrate their work and influence in our work including relevant trends, while also allowing the youth to benefit from the knowledge the programme staff can provide.

## Strengthening community resilience

* The capacity for at-risk communities to use social media platforms has been observed in many response operations, from Haiti to the Thai floods in 2011 and Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.[[4]](#footnote-4) Social media platforms provide a space for communities to build a shared meaning and understanding of events. It also gives communities the ability to share their stories and support a collective narrative, all of which support resilience building. Given these trends, the Red Cross Red Crescent and its humanitarian partners are in a unique position to engage and enable this sharing, both within our own established platforms, and those that communities initiate themselves. We need to support the learning process and ensure that we do it right and we do it well.

## Build the conversation with communities

* Social media provides an easy and accessible avenue to dialogue with communities and leaders. The RCRC needs to ensure we open the door and embrace the opportunity to maintain the 2-way conversation on social media. There are examples of the dialogue taking place before and during disasters to save lives, and afterwards to reunite families or disseminate critical information on emergency aid. The RCRC needs to learn from these experiences and maximize the opportunity to improve our methods of operating in these contexts as we all know the frequency and severity of disasters is only increasing.

# Objectives

* Facilitate learning between National Societies and key IFRC/ICRC staff; particularly for those National Societies who are all leaders in social media for the Movement.
* Contribute to the capacity of selected National Societies to use social media for resilience whether in areas of health or disaster management.
* Inspire creativity and progress of current programming, and encourage replication of best practice while adapting to the needs and context of each country.
* Strengthen relations between National Societies communications’ staff which will contribute to stronger communication and information sharing during times of emergency and crises.
* Contribute the knowledge and expertise on social media within the global International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

# Scope and expected outcomes

The event should be a maximum of 3-days. Co-hosted by Palang Merah Indonesia in Jakarta. The key focus of the event is to give an opportunity for PMI an opportunity to showcase their work, with an additional focus on community engagement and advocacy through social media. Outcomes include: 3-day learning event (see draft planning document for details), a potential 1-day exchange with Timor-Leste, a potential visit from AHA Centre communications , potential visit to/from Twitter or Facebook.

## Budget

The IFRC South-East Asia regional delegation has an identified budget to cover the transport and in-country accommodation for a select number of National Societies to attend from the region of Southeast Asia. The budget also includes set costs for the IFRC country office and PMI to host the event.

# Contact information

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1. We Are Social’ http://www.slideshare.net/hatchprogram/asia-pacific-digital-overview-2014-39273922 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Page 9, *Social Media: The Opportunities and Constraints in Southeast Asian Emerging Markets*, Baker and MacKenzie 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://blog.instagram.com/post/69877035043/top-locations-2013> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://irevolution.net/2012/12/04/disaster-tweets-thailand-floods/>. The month before (Sept-to-Oct) also a notable increase of tweets, which may “demonstrate that Thais were using Twitter to search for realtime and practical information that traditional media could not provide during the natural disaster period. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)