



## Embracing social media: Timor-Leste Red Cross and Indonesian Red Cross link to learn

### Introduction

Around the world, digital technologies have profoundly changed our societies. They are transforming our economies, the way we communicate, access information and conduct our work. The digital revolution has touched all corners of the globe, including Southeast Asia.

Over the past decade, Internet penetration has steadily increased across the region, with usage of social media and messaging apps steadily rising as they become cheaper and easier to access on mobile phones.

In this context, social media has become an important communications channel for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In Southeast Asia, Facebook and Twitter in particular are platforms the National Societies are using for a wide range of purposes: from communicating their work, to disseminating important health and safety messages, recruiting new donors and volunteers, coordinating emergency response, and – critically – opening two-way dialogue with the public.

### Background

Guiding and supporting the development of National Societies is a key mandate of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). With 190 member National Societies worldwide, there is a wide range of expertise and experience to draw upon within the Red Cross Red Crescent network: National Societies successfully develop from one another through sharing experiences and technical expertise, as well as face-to-face exchange.



In 2015, IFRC identified the potential for facilitating peer-to-peer exchange, in the area of social media, between the National Societies of Indonesia and Timor-Leste (Cruz Vermelha Timor-Leste, or CVTL). To carry the learning process forward, the IFRC approached CVTL's sister National Society, Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI) to provide support. With strong experience in the strategic use of social media, a common language (Bahasa), geographical proximity, and shared cultural understanding, PMI proved to be the perfect partner.

<sup>1</sup> 'Digital, Social & Mobile in Southeast Asia in 2015', We Are Social, November 2015, Slide 27  
<http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/digital-social-mobile-in-southeast-asia-in-2015/>

<sup>2</sup> 'Jakarta named the world's most active Twitter city', Jakarta Post, August 1 2012  
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/08/01/jakarta-named-world-s-most-active-twitter-city.html>

## Context

### Indonesia

With over 88 million active and savvy Internet users, or 34 per cent of the population<sup>1</sup>, Indonesia is one of the region's leaders in use of social media. In 2012, Jakarta was popularly dubbed the "Twitter capital of the world"<sup>2</sup>.

The Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia, or PMI) has embraced the opportunity to use digital tools to complement its use of more traditional forms of communication, such as face-to-face, radio, TV and newspapers. With a well-established [Facebook community](#) of 229K+ followers, 599K+ on [Twitter](#), and an innovative disaster response crowd-sourcing mobile app, [Mobile Rapid Assessment](#), PMI is considered a leading National Society globally, in terms of its use of digital communication.

### Timor-Leste

Neighboring Timor-Leste is now starting to see a strong increase in the use of social media, with approximately a quarter of the population now active on Facebook<sup>3</sup>.

For CVTL, a relatively young National Society established in 2000, the emphasis for communication has remained on more traditional channels, such as radio, TV, newspapers and face-to-face meetings. However, over the past several years CVTL has used its [Facebook page](#) as an additional means through which to share information and updates with the public

In the last 12 months, CVTL has recognized more and more the utility of social media in reaching youth, giving visibility to their work to international audiences (including partners, donors and media) and using it as a tool to gather and share stories from the community. They have also recognized the continuing trend towards a digitally connected world.

Affordable, reliable Internet connectivity does remain a key challenge for CVTL and Timor-Leste more broadly.

## Learning from each other

While the Red Cross Societies of Timor-Leste and Indonesia have different country contexts for social media, each also have respective strengths and experience in the way it is used. The National Societies also face their own respective challenges, identified through various trainings and collaboration between the IFRC, PMI and CVTL.

Between April 2015 and August 2016, the relationship and skills exchange between the social media officers of PMI and CVTL has built up steadily through a number of planned face-to-face meetings and ongoing virtual support:

<sup>3</sup> 'Digital, Social & Mobile in Southeast Asia in 2015', We Are Social, November 2015, Slide 41 <http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/digital-social-mobile-in-southeast-asia-in-2015/>

### 1 One-day Social Media Training Dili, 23 April 2015

Facilitated by IFRC, CVTL staff joined a training providing an introduction to social media, its value to supporting CVTL's objectives, guidelines for staff use, and the reputational risks associated with online activity. The agenda was well-received and provided the foundation for further technical skills-building across the organization. From the training, CVTL's strengths, concerns and key areas for development were identified.

### 2 Southeast Asia Social Media Learning Exchange, Jakarta 24-26 November 2015

This event was attended by 28 participants from 9 National Societies across Southeast Asia. It was an opportunity for participants to share knowledge and experiences, best practice examples and challenges in using social media in disaster response, community engagement and advocacy campaigns.

### 3 One-to-One Staff Shadowing, Jakarta 27 November 2015

Following the Learning Exchange, the social media officer from Timor-Leste stayed an additional day to shadow the social media officer of PMI, learning about PMI's social media management on a daily basis. This included social content & message planning, supporting relevant units in case of emergencies and specific campaigns, and monitoring activities.

## 4 Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Communications Forum 14-16 March 2016, South Korea

At this event 100 staff from 23 National Societies, including CVTL and PMI, came together with members of the IFRC and ICRC to discuss and share best practice in digital communications. The event was another opportunity for PMI and CVTL's communications officers to share their experiences using social media. This included PMI's lessons learned in developing their [Mobile Rapid Assessment](#) phone app and health campaigns using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

## 5 One day Social Media Training Dili, 23 April 2015

PMI led this training with 23 participants from across CVTL, including staff from the Communications, Disaster Management, Health, Youth, Finance, Fundraising, RFL and Organizational Development units. The objectives of the training were to raise the importance of social media; to learn to use social media to disseminate information for wider audiences during emergencies, non-emergencies and for advocacy (campaigns); and to encourage CVTL staff to regularly and systematically send updates to the CVTL communications team.

## 6 Ongoing Virtual Support & Cooperation

The social media officers of PMI and CVTL remain in touch via WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Skype, sharing questions or problems related to social media; exchanging new social media tools, resources, and trends; and supporting each others efforts online.

## Key outcomes

### Among the key results of the peer cooperation

1. A strengthened and enduring relationship between the communications departments of the two National Societies of Indonesia and Timor-Leste
2. An increase in the skills, knowledge and confidence of the social media officers, and National Societies more broadly
3. A new [Twitter account](#) for CVTL providing a new channel for the National Society to promote its work and to communicate with external partners including media agencies, the Government of Timor-Leste, donors and the IFRC



CVTL staff take part in a social media training in Dili, 23 April 2015



CVTL's communications team shadow PMI's Social Media Officer in Jakarta, 27 November 2015



CVTL tweets a photo of PMI Social Media Officer, Ayu Paraswati leading a training with CVTL staff, 19 April 2016

*“This process has pushed me to do better. I have had to learn more and deepen my understanding of social media before sharing with my colleagues at CVTL. I’ve also used this opportunity to evaluate myself and how I engage with social media”*

**Ayu Paraswati, PMI Social Media Officer**

*“When I have difficulties with social media, like Facebook or Twitter, I contact Ayu directly. She gives me a clear explanation so I easily understand what to do in the situation”*

**Casimiro Ferreira, CVTL Communications Officer**

*“The example PMI and CVTL peer-to-peer accompaniment in social media should become a model for other activities”*

**Giorgio Ferrario, Head of IFRC’s Country Cluster Support Team for Indonesia and Timor-Leste**

## Conclusion

The ongoing success of peer cooperation between CVTL and PMI demonstrates how the right match between National Societies is an effective way to build capacity and learn from each other’s successes and challenges. This case study also demonstrates how the tailored technical support further complements the regional-level trainings and workshops. It is a model which can be effectively replicated across a range of areas of work.

Looking to the future, PMI and CVTL intend to continue to work together, problem solving and developing better practices in using social media to support the collective goal of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: “saving lives, changing minds”.

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**For more detail on the information contained in this case study, please contact:**

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