



COCONET

Southeast Asia Digital Rights Camp
October 2017 | Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Outcomes Report



EngageMedia.org



APC
ASSOCIATION FOR
PROGRESSIVE
COMMUNICATIONS



SEAPA
Southeast Asian Press Alliance



Coconet summary video (long)



Coconet summary video (short)

1. Introduction

On 21-27 October 2017, 105 digital rights experts, journalists, activists, artists, technologists, researchers and film-makers gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia for [COCONET: a Southeast Asia Digital Rights Camp](#).

Participants converged from across Asia and the Pacific to share their knowledge, skills, tools, experiences and ideas about digital rights in a series of assemblies, open-space workshops, labs and evening activities.

The result? Twenty-six collaborations to build the digital right movements in the region, which range from a network of defenders against online persecution and the production of digital security materials, to short films to support digital rights campaigning and the translation of digital safety tools into Burmese, Indonesian and Khmer.

Inspired by the discussions and newly established relationships at COCONET, participants are cross-pollinating human-rights and social-movement gatherings with digital rights ideas. Meanwhile, journalists, civic technologists and film-makers have joined forces with activists and NGOs to create deeper links with the digital rights field.

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“COCONET showed me a community I want to live in, where everyone shares strong values. I really love this community.”

Zar Chi Oo, Human Rights Activist, Myanmar

A strong feminist focus also emerged, with collaborations including a compilation of case studies on online sexism, an online reading group on cyborg feminism and a feminist internet pop-up event.

Underlying these collaborations is a powerful potential. COCONET has established trust and connections that participants continue to build on, with many “Coconutz” reporting greater awareness of digital rights issues in other countries and a sense of support and community from sharing their experiences.

And these collaborations and sense of community are needed now more than ever. Civil society actors find themselves in an online environment increasingly full of risks, and despite substantial efforts, these issues remain little known or appreciated amongst the general public.

This led [EngageMedia](#), [the Association for Progressive Communications \(APC\)](#), the [Southeast Asian Press Alliance \(SEAPA\)](#) and a regional consortium to produce the COCONET Camp. We believe COCONET made great strides towards building the networks and relationships that are essential to strengthening the digital rights movement in Southeast Asia.

Who came to the camp?

420 Applicants
105 Participants

59% Women

From

81%	13%	6%
Southeast Asia	Other Asian & Pacific countries	Europe & North America

Affiliations


 23%
Digital Rights Advocates/ Researchers

 34%
Campaigners

 4%
Artists & Designers

 4%
Funders

 26%
Journalists & Film-makers

 9%
Technologists

2. Methodology and strategy

2.1 Regional consortium

EngageMedia, APC, SEAPA and the partners oversaw a regional consortium of seven media and digital rights organisations in Southeast Asia. These included [Empower \(Malaysia\)](#), [Myanmar ICT for Development Organization \(MIDO\)](#), [SAFENET](#), and [PurpleCode Collective \(Indonesia\)](#), [Thai Netizen Network](#), [WITNESS](#), and the [Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#).

In November 2016, EngageMedia gathered the regional consortium in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to co-design the Camp. The consortium established the Camp objectives, advised on methodology and also came up with the name.

2.2 Camp and open-space approach

COCONET was organised as a peer-to-peer meeting of experts in their own field. The Camp application asked applicants about the skills and knowledge they wanted to share or learn, and the workshops they could host. We then used these answers to design the Camp program and address the needs and expectations of participants.

We used an open-space format to set the agenda on the first day. This unleashed a wave of creativity and excitement as participants clustered to develop ideas for sessions and create new spaces and collaborations.

The Camp methodology was new to many; however, most adapted quickly once they saw it in action. We used this method as it quickly surfaces the key issues that interest participants and creates buy-in and ownership of the Camp. This creates active participants and, most importantly, real-work collaborations after the Camp.

The remote location also aimed to keep participants focused, move them out of their comfort zone and help them to develop trust and relationships with their co-campers so they could exchange ideas and create new ones.

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“The camp was inspiring in giving me ideas for campaigns in digital literacy, safety and rights.”

*Kathleen Azali, C2O
Library&Collabtive,
Indonesia*

2.3 Setting the culture

COCONET also provided a dynamic, safe and open space to support collaboration and community building. To ensure the space remained this way, EngageMedia sent guidelines to participants before the Camp started, and made sure that these guidelines were clear to people at the event.

Some of the items in the guidelines included:

- practising privacy by default
- asking participants to refrain from social media for both security purposes and to ensure they maximised face-to-face time to build connections
- ensuring safe and harassment-free spaces, which included a committee of volunteers to address any incidents
- encouraging participants to embrace a spirit of sharing and respectful debating.

3. Camp activities

The Camp included a range of activities designed to increase knowledge-sharing, foster relationships, facilitate collaborations and enhance direct skills in media, technology and policy.

3.1 General Assemblies

The core partners and the consortium designed the General Assemblies to highlight common themes in the region, foster understanding of different country contexts and provide a digital rights frame for other sessions. For more than half the participants, their digital rights experience was limited so the General Assemblies acted as introductions.

- **Stories of our Movements** explored the movements that participants belong to, how they became involved, their success and weaknesses, and how to build a regional digital rights movement.





- **Shrinking Democratic Spaces** used the [spectrogram](#) method to visualise and debate the state of human rights and democracy across the region.
- **The Elephant in the Room: The Use of Corporate Technology for Activism** explored case studies to question our reliance on big technology companies that are often unsympathetic, or even hostile, to our causes.
- **Digital Rights Movement Building** explored how to expand the digital rights movement at a national and regional level. Participants split into four groups and debated why and how such a movement might succeed or fail.

3.2 Labs and Open-space sessions

Participants designed and led over 60 open-space sessions ranging from graphic design and film-making, to building a feminist internet and more.

There were also two labs: “**Privacy, Safety and Security**” (PSS), which focused on technologies and strategies for digital security, and “**Campaigns**”, which looked at a variety of strategies and tactics for media making and movement building.

The PSS Lab hosted hands-on sessions about digital safety and security, including how to install Linux, how to check the security of a website, how to use a Virtual Private Network, among others. There were also discussions on non-technology based practices and strategies for secure communications.

The Campaigns lab explored an international video campaign on the Rohingya crisis, while another focused on #stopthecrackdownVN, a campaign against the suppression of democracy in Vietnam.

Feminist and LGBTIQ issues were a particular focus at the Camp and some highlights included:

- [Feminist Principles of the Internet](#) explored how social media sites are censoring women’s bodies; how the internet has helped feminists reach out to more women and LGBTIQs; and the widespread nature of misogynistic content on social media.
- **LGBTIQ activism in the Digital Era: Building a movement offline and online** showcased initiatives of [PLUSOS](#), [PT Foundation \(Malaysia\)](#) and others.
- A participant from [Internet Democracy Project](#), India, hosted a discussion on [Gendering Surveillance](#), which explored how women are surveilled and the effects.

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“I have been using knowledge about digital security for my work and help partners I corresponding. We now have more secure communication and feel more comfortable to work in this shrinking space.”

Tom, International Accountability Project (IAP), Thailand

Other highlights:

- **Online defamation and the criminalisation of dissent** focused on the jailing of dissidents in Myanmar under the 66D laws, the jailing of democracy activists in Thailand under lese majeste laws, and the use of defamation to silence government criticism in Singapore.
- Journalists hosted sessions discussing the **Situation of Press Freedom in Southeast Asia, unpacking fake news**, and how journalism is being challenged by misinformation and disinformation online.
- **A media literacy session** focused on how to understand media in the age of social media.
- A digital rights expert from [Myanmar Center for Responsible Business \(MCRB\)](#) hosted a session on how to **engage key decision-makers and stakeholders** to effect positive legal reforms.
- EngageMedia, [Sinar Project](#), Empower Malaysia, and [Viet Tan](#) hosted sessions on policies with regional impacts, such as the [ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2020 \(AIM 2020\)](#) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- **Film-makers, artists and campaigners hosted workshops** on video production, mobile video, impact design and evaluation, and developing effective campaigns.
- A participant from Lancaster University, who has been based in Indonesia for years, hosted **Save the World with Drones**, where participants learnt about “drone activism” and learnt to fly a drone.
- Some sessions focused on holistic approaches to **activist well-being and self-care**.





3.3 Other Activities

Beyond the formal workshops, there was a mixture of other activities. These ranged from nightly film screenings on digital rights, human rights and environmental issues, to a night market where local vendors sold organic coffee, clothes or hand-made soap, to morning meditation sessions and 'insanity' fitness classes.

On the Wednesday afternoon, participants visited the Borobudur temple, Prambanan temple or a Javanese museum, or took a local cultural walk. The PSS lab also continued operating at night to host discussions on topics such as blockchain, and to help participants install security software such as [Signal](#) and [PGP](#).

4. Achievements

COCONET Camp helped to strengthen trust, relationships, regional coordination and collaborations amongst the 105 participants, and to build the capacity of the digital rights movement in Southeast Asia. It also brought a large group of new people into the digital rights space, expanding the movement beyond the usual suspects.

4.1 Media

A range of media was produced as a result of the camp, including videos and blog posts.

Video:

- [Long summary video](#)
- [Short summary video](#)
- [Thai PBS news report](#)
- [Chat, Association for Progressive Communications, The Philippines](#)
- [Cathy, Association for Progressive Communications, Taiwan/Canada](#)
- [Ilang Ilang, AlterMidya, The Philippines](#)
- [Wai Phyo, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, Myanmar](#)
- [Jeremy, PT Foundation, Malaysia](#)
- [Digital Rights in Myanmar](#)

Blog posts / reports:

- [COCONET S.E. Asia Digital Rights Camp: Interviews With Nine Digital Rights Activists](#)
- [Video and technology for humans rights documentation at COCONET](#)
- [Digital Rights Foundation attended 5-day Digital Rights Camp in Indonesia](#)
- [Video interviews with some of the amazing people at COCONET](#)
- [COCONET Camp, where Southeast Asian activists share experiences](#)
- [Pocket power: a mobile video production workshop at COCONET](#)
- [MCRB Participates in Southeast Asia Digital Rights Camp](#)
- [Rangoli as a way to explore networks](#)
- [COCONET: Learning from each other to achieve the social justice that we all want](#)
- [COCONET: Learning to maximise the benefits of technology for human rights advocacy](#)
- [Consumer information security tools – Thai localization 2017 summary](#)
- [Rappler: Fake news and freedom of expression in Southeast Asia](#)

4.2 Regional relationships and collaborations

COCONET alumni have continued to harness the collaborative power of the relationships and networks they built at the Camp. Together, they have created resources, hosted events, run sessions at other human rights conferences, developed support groups, written solidarity statements, provided technical support, compiled case studies, produced publications, films and media, and planned more projects for the future.

Collaborations included:

- Netherlands-based technology provider, [Greenhost](#), is providing two Malaysian civil society organisations with a VPS and VPN to support their work, as well as technical support for a Vietnamese participant organisation.
- COCONET funder [Internews](#) helped [Body & Data](#) to access funding to conduct research in Nepal on digital rights and internet use.
- [Localization Lab](#) partnered with EngageMedia to [host a localization sprint](#) immediately after the Camp. The sprint involved more than 16 people from almost as many organisations and was hugely productive. It translated [Signal](#), a secure messaging application, into Burmese, Indonesian and Khmer, and also translated Tor Browser into Indonesian.
- Twelve COCONET alumni from Myanmar and Southeast Asia attended [the Myanmar Digital Rights Forum in January 2018](#), which was co-organised by [Phandeeyar](#), MIDO, EngageMedia, [Free Expression Myanmar](#) and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business.
- Viet Tan, Vietnam, combined forces with Empower Malaysia, APC, SEAPA, and EngageMedia to organise [a roundtable discussion on digital rights in Southeast Asia at the ASEAN People's Forum \(APF\)](#) in Manila in November 2017.
- Empower Malaysia, [GANDA Filipinas](#) and [Foundation for Media Alternatives \(The Philippines\)](#), collaborated with EngageMedia to hold [a Feminist internet pop-up event at the ASEAN People's Forum in Manila](#).
- The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) worked with Camp participant and artist Ivana to design [a publication about freedom of expression](#).
- Immediately after the Camp, APC organised a meeting of 10 digital security trainers to develop digital rights and digital security materials for national human rights institutions.
- A journalist from [Tafara.tl](#) from Timor Leste, and a participant from [Action Committee for Democracy Development \(ACDD\)](#) from Myanmar, are working with their local press councils to conduct media literacy advocacy targeting politicians. ACDD is also planning to do media literacy advocacy with youth in Myanmar.
- EngageMedia and MIDO developed a partnership to produce two short films and an impact campaign on digital rights issues in Myanmar. The project has since confirmed funding with APC's sub-granting program.

5. Next steps

Our key objectives remain the same: to bring new actors into the movement for digital rights, including human rights organisations, journalists, feminists, technologists, and to build their capacity to communicate effectively.

COCONET has proven a successful platform for achieving these objectives, fostering new relationships between allied organisations and digital rights actors, and producing an engaged and active network that continues to collaborate on a daily basis.

At the end of the Camp, there was significant demand for a COCONET 2 and a series of COCONET-style events – on a city, country or sub-regional level, or on particular themes. We believe that more Camps would support the need for further regional and localised movement building.

COCONET could only accommodate five to 15 participants per country, and it is important that we move beyond English speakers and democratise the knowledge and networks. Further Camps or events could focus on a language group, such as Khmer, Tagalog or Thai; or on a region, such as the Mekong or Malay Southeast Asia; or on themes such as training women coders, digital labour rights, and much more.

Secondly, there is scope for more regional campaign coordination. Most countries have at least some daily networks to coordinate campaigns and activities, with some stronger than others. However, these networks are more limited at a regional level.

COCONET highlighted the diversity of regional campaigns and their interconnections, as well as the role of information technology, the importance of effective advocacy communications and the impact of context. It also demonstrated a deep hunger for regional coordination and interaction.

The Camp makes the case for a multi-issue advocacy platform that will enable activists to highlight emergencies, coordinate campaigns and share updated skills and technology. While it is a challenge to create a permanent forum to sustain the Camp's exchange and solidarity, there would be substantial enthusiasm for further campaign communications and coordination platforms if done correctly.

Thirdly, there is a need for ongoing media capacity building to improve communications strategies and social impact. More coordinated, regional production of content could serve a variety of digital rights and online freedom-of-expression issues.

Lastly, we need to increase the regional coordination and capacity of digital security trainers. Online safety was an overarching theme from a variety of perspectives – gender, privacy and democracy, among others – and the need for digital security skills is increasing rapidly. However, the number, coordination and networking of regional resource people remains low despite significant efforts. We advise investing long term in developing trainers from the region.

EngageMedia, APC and SEAPA intend to follow up on many of these initiatives, although we encourage funders to build the ecosystem and support a variety of different initiatives as much as possible, especially those that are partnership based.

Organisers



Collaborators



Thanks to our funders

