



24th TALKING ASEAN

Challenges of Raising ASEAN Awareness: Multi-sector Perspectives

**The Habibie Center, Jakarta
August 26, 2015**

INTRODUCTION

JAKARTA—On Wednesday, 26 August, 2015, The Habibie Center hosted its 24th Talking ASEAN dialogue entitled, “*Challenges of Raising ASEAN Awareness: Multi-sector Perspectives*” at The Habibie Center building in Jakarta. This edition of Talking ASEAN was moderated by Dr. Alexander Chandra (Associate Fellow, The Habibie Center) and featured an expert panel made up of Mr. Asep Setiawan (Head of Content and Knowledge Division, Metro TV), Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum (Senior Advisor on ASEAN and Human Rights Working Group) and Mr. Ilman Dzikri (President of Indonesian Student Association for International Studies).

The objectives of this Talking ASEAN were to: a) analyze the successes and weaknesses of ASEAN’s current engagement with people from various sectors to raise greater awareness and identity with ASEAN; b) discuss the views of people from various sectors about ASEAN, in particular their interests in promoting ASEAN, how much they care about the regional organization and what they really know about the regional integration process; and c) make recommendations about improving the level of engagement and involvement of ASEAN to better promote ASEAN awareness and identity.

This discussion report summarizes the key points of each speaker, as well as the question and answer session that followed.

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Mr. Ilman Dzikri



Mr. Ilman Dzikri - President of Indonesian Student Association for International Studies

Mr. Ilman Dzikri represented the youth perspective in this discussion of raising ASEAN awareness. He began his presentation by playing videos containing statements from two ASEAN youths about their perception of ASEAN. These young people stated that the ASEAN Community was going to open up more opportunities for them especially in the business sector, although they were also aware that a lot of challenges would also come.

Mr Dzikri proceeded by sharing his experience in international conferences where he got to meet fellow ASEAN youths. He saw that these people were prouder calling themselves as citizens of their own country rather than as citizens of ASEAN. This showed that the sense of belonging towards ASEAN is still low.

However Mr. Dzikri noticed that there was an increasing attempt by ASEAN to familiarize youths with its upcoming ASEAN Community. ASEAN used multiple platforms, such as conferences, seminars, or student exchanges to create mutual understanding among youth in ASEAN.

On the other hand, there were also several factors that he considered as challenges in raising the awareness. First, he noted that the socialization of the ASEAN Community started a little late since it was actually initiated back in 2002. Second, this community building project was still very elitist,

because he saw that students and youths in general were not familiar with it. The third challenge - related to the previous one - is the top-down nature of the project. Most of the attempts to raise awareness were made by officials, such as the ASEAN Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or other state institutions. Mr. Dzikri thought that it should be a bottom-up effort, to make people at the center of the regional integration. The last challenge that he mentioned is the lack and partial understanding that people have for ASEAN. Most youth wrongly perceived the ASEAN Community as competition, especially in the economic sector.

Mr. Dzikri further emphasized the importance of youth in the ASEAN Community. He considered this group of people more sincere to involve in raising ASEAN awareness, without any agenda to involve further in terms of politics or economics. There were also a few things that youth could contribute. They can involve in the engagement effort, although they barely take part in the decision making process. A comprehensive understanding about other pillars is also crucial in order to achieve a thorough integration.

He continued by suggesting that ASEAN should invest more on youth to improve the ASEAN Community as they have more energy, time and creativity. Mr. Dzikri reflected on his experience while he submitted his proposal of an ASEAN Tourism Festival to the ASEAN Foundation as an initiative of youth to create a sense of ASEAN awareness. However, he didn't manage to get it approved. He regretted that sometimes the youths' initiatives to support ASEAN Community building project do not meet the support from the officials. The presentation was concluded by Mr. Dzikri stating that he would continue to help raise ASEAN awareness among youth through the organization that he leads.

“Young people seem prouder calling themselves as citizens of their own country rather than as citizens of ASEAN.”

- Mr. Ilman Dzikri -

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Mr. Asep Setiawan —



Mr. Asep Setiawan - Head of Content and Knowledge Division, Metro TV

The second speaker, Mr. Asep Setiawan represented the media's point of view towards ASEAN and the challenge of raising awareness. He began by giving an illustration of how ASEAN has actually started forming the Community years ago through the exchange of migrant workers. The same thing also applies in the television and media industry, where each of the countries' media persons is being stationed in different ASEAN countries. This was seen as a way in which they could reconnect and form community at the first place.

Despite being optimistic about the Community, Mr. Setiawan noticed that ASEAN member states are varied in terms of their media characters. This

happened because there are gaps and differences in their political structure and economic development. Therefore, the level of ASEAN awareness is also related to the domestic situation. It was important to understand the national characters of each country to prepare an effective socialization instrument.

Mr. Setiawan proposed three-level of approaches to enhance ASEAN awareness among the people. At the first level, the socialization is in the hand of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the people. The second one depends on the cooperation between government and certain level of people, such as established NGOs. The last step of socialization is merely the government's responsibility. However, some governments are facing difficulties in terms of their lack of infrastructure. Therefore, the strategy of raising ASEAN awareness is again determined by the domestic system of each ASEAN member states.

“The level of ASEAN awareness is also related to the domestic situation and it is important to understand the national characters of each country to prepare an effective socialization instrument.”

- Mr. Asep Setiawan -

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum



Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum - Senior Advisor on ASEAN and Human Rights at Human Rights Working Group (HRWG)

The last one to speak was Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum who offered her perspective on the role of civil society in promoting ASEAN awareness. She started her remark by acknowledging that civil society played a great role in ASEAN advocacy. However she noted the irony that civil society was often the most invisible one in the eyes of ASEAN, despite having contributed the most for the Association.

Ms. Wahyuningrum then proceeded by highlighting some of the shortcomings in ASEAN's attempt to building a Community. With regards to ASEAN identity building, she noted that it was a long process. There were some efforts made by ASEAN but they were not well-implemented. She then elaborated further by mentioning how ASEAN products—such as publication and dissemination—did not use familiar language for the people as the actual beneficiaries of this community building project. Instead they tend to use technical and official

wordings more suitable for government officials. As such, those products did not represent things that were important for the people. In order to create a sense of ASEAN identity among the people, these things need to be translated into simple languages with a down to earth approach.

To promote this sense of identity, Ms. Wahyuningrum emphasized that it is important to be aware of ASEAN values. That being said, having an ASEAN identity is not merely about having one single identity, but having respect to things that are valuable for this Association such as human rights, gender equality, democracy and good governance. A second point that she liked to stress was the importance to have interest in this community building project. Ms. Wahyuningrum suggested the audience to think about how ASEAN is going to be beneficial for them and how being ASEAN is going to make them proud.

She concluded by noting that with the development of internet and social media, the lack of tools was no longer the problem. Instead the problem was with the content is. In order to raise a sense of ASEAN awareness, the content needed to be meaningful and easily understandable for the people.

“In order to create a sense of ASEAN identity among the people, we need to talk in simple languages with a down to earth approach.”

- Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum -

Q&A SESSION



Alexander C. Chandra - Associate Fellow at The Habibie Center and formerly Executive Director of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), moderates the Q&A session.

Comment No.1

What is the rationale of needing ASEAN identity? What do we get once we have it? Is this another case of society being co-opted by states to achieve their national interests?

Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum

The way civil society wants to develop this sense of ASEAN identity is different with the member-states' direction. By having the annual ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC), there is a certain level of identity formulated as an ongoing process. For 11 years, ACSC has been shaping the feeling of togetherness, they want human rights to be ASEAN's primary value and they reject the idea of non-interference as ASEAN's basic principle. These things are always reflected in the ACSC's statement. At the same time, the group of civil society has been very worried about having the slogan "One Vision, One Identity, One Community". They try to reject the idea of "One Identity." Malaysia has been very vocal in rejecting this notion, especially because this country consists of many races and cultures. Those values can bring people together to share common interests, issues and concerns in dealing with the problems that ASEAN is currently facing.

Being identified as ASEAN gives them more voices and greater leverage when they come to the governments in ASEAN. It is an opportunity/purpose-based identity that has been created so far. There has been a changing attitude of some of the governments by bringing ASEAN identity. It is very useful for the purpose of advocacy although it has not yet developed.

Comment No.2

To promote ASEAN awareness, the media including televisions or newspapers have a certain role to play. How about creating a whole section of the news to focus on ASEAN and has there been any attempts by any of the media to try this?

Mr. Asep Setiawan

Some media have started to make programs about ASEAN. Three years ago, Metro TV started a thirty-minute program facilitated by the ASEAN Secretariat in which the presenter interacted with people from other countries in ASEAN. At that time, it was funded by the ASEAN Secretariat, but unfortunately there was a changing policy in Metro TV itself so it was discontinued. There have been a lot of similar initiatives among the media to increase the level of ASEAN exposure. But the problem is about the funding and the difficulties to find headquarter for such media initiative. So, the intention is already there and the media in ASEAN is ready to collaborate, but it's just that technical issues are difficult to solve. It is also a struggle to maintain the commitment from the media. We need the ASEAN Secretariat to facilitate and push the initiative in order to make it work.

Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum

There was ASEAN TV aired in Thailand during their chairmanship and ASEAN Channel in Metro TV. There was also an initiative from GIZ to bring journalist from ten countries to the

Q&A SESSION

ASEAN Summit. It was really helpful for the consumers because they suddenly have a flood of information about governments' discussion during the summit. But now there is no more of this project.

If you also notice, when certain ASEAN country becomes ASEAN Chair, there's a tendency from the media to have full exposure on ASEAN news and the priority of the Chair. It is an attempt to promote to the people of what the Chairmanship is doing. But once the Chairmanship is over, the exposure is also gone, because the media has no more interest in it anymore. The rotating Chairmanship is beneficial because that is how the awareness among people is developed but the problem is sustaining it.

We need not only the awareness of people, but also the companies and the media to make ASEAN feasible and understandable for the people.

Comment No.3

How can we actually make this ASEAN awareness a success? When you are trying to portray ASEAN, how do you do it? Why can't we have such big exposure on ASEAN issues? There are issues that are relatively interesting that a lot of Indonesian audience can actually relate to.

Mr. Asep Setiawan

Metro TV itself has an editorial policy. But most private companies rely on the news that sells. Based on my experience, to enhance understanding about ASEAN, there should be interaction among stakeholders, like countries of ASEAN or the ASEAN Secretariat. But so far we don't have any inputs from the stakeholders, so we thought this is not very important for ourselves. Compared to other governments, like Australia or European, they approach the media to help promoting cultures and understandings. So the media is following the government's move. When we put certain news, we also have

to consider the audience's responses. When it seems that there is less attention from the public, we would remove that particular news from the section.

Mr. Ilman Dzikri

It is the media who create the sense of urgency on a certain issue. Does it mean that ASEAN is not important? Because when media gives more coverage to the issue of ASEAN, it will also give a greater sense of awareness to the people.

There's already ACSS, but how is the youth involvement in the conference? What contribution can we do through CSOs activities?

Mr. Asep Setiawan:

The media has already tried to inform the public through its media activities, but it often stays in the realm of high politics such as diplomacy, summit and it's not down to earth news. Therefore, we should create interaction among stakeholders but we don't have any forums to do so. Secondly, while we do have some well information it's mostly about ASEAN tourism. It is still very limited. We might need more inputs of how popularizing ASEAN identity in the form of news.

Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum

The youth in the ACSC has been participating from the beginning but they do not identify themselves as youth. During the 2008 conference, there was an ASEAN Youth Forum prior the ACSC where they brought their statement to the conference. Usually in the opening session, they will read the statement and during the workshop they'll make sure that their recommendation is being integrated into the ACSC's statement. For the last two years, the agenda of the ASEAN Youth Forum is to push for an ASEAN Youth policy. They've been moving from the talking of education, exchange, and volunteerism and now they want to have a comprehensive pack of youth policy. The good thing about youth is that they're very loyal to the idea. They've been consistently talking about ASEAN Youth policy at the national,

Q&A SESSION

regional and even international level. Youth can participate freely since it's an open space but they still need to register.

Comment No.5:

This is a crazy suggestion but there's one way to raise ASEAN awareness: ASEAN member countries can apply altogether for the FIFA World Cup. The countries in Southeast Asia have something to work together to raise their importance in the eye of the world. It lets people know that together ASEAN countries can do something that they couldn't achieve on their own. They can feel that it's important for them to have ASEAN so it helps increase their ASEAN awareness.

Comment No.6:

What exactly is our role as youth for regional integration? Youths are aware of ASEAN Community but they don't know how relevant it is to their life. We have the same intention of helping to raise the awareness but the ASEAN Secretariat does not give actual support.

Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum

Two years ago during Surin Pitsuwan's secretary-generalship of ASEAN, there was an initiative to host World Cup in ASEAN countries by rotating around Southeast Asia.

Mr. Ilman Dzikri

The youth can help people to be ready. They can help socializing changes that the people might encounter once the Community is established. Another additional point that the youths have is that they can do what bureaucracies can't. Youths from all over ASEAN can gather, spread news about it and share their similarities and concerns.

Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum

ASEAN needs to come up with a branding strategy to make people think that we are ASEAN. Second, proper incentive needs to be awarded for those people who contribute in raising ASEAN awareness and also recognize these individuals, groups or communities.

---END---





PROJECT SUPERVISOR:

Rahimah Abdulrahim
(Executive Director)

Hadi Kuntjara
(Deputy Director for Operations)

HEAD OF ASEAN STUDIES PROGRAM:

A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi

RESEARCHERS:

Fina Astriana

Muhamad Arif

Askabea Fadhilla

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION :

Mila Oktaviani

Layout and Design by Rahma

ASEAN Studies Program - The Habibie Center

The Habibie Center Building

Jl. Kemang Selatan No.98, Jakarta 12560

Tel: 62 21 781 7211

Fax: 62 21 781 7212

Email: thc@habibiecenter.or.id

www.habibiecenter.or.id

www.thcasean.org

[facebook.com/habibiecenter](https://www.facebook.com/habibiecenter) [@habibiecenter](https://twitter.com/habibiecenter)



The Habibie Center