

The **Indonesian Update**

Monthly Review on Economic, Legal, Security, Political, and Social Affairs

Main Report

Characterization and the Death of Expertise:
What is the Quality of Digital Activism Among Indonesian Youth?

Economy

The Efforts to Implement Environmental Justice
in Mitigating Ecological Distribution Conflicts in Indonesia ■
Taxes, Economic Growth, and Climate Change in Indonesia ■

Law

Civil Disobedience and Lessons for Indonesia ■
The Indonesian National Police's Human Rights
Pocket book and Its Implementation ■

Politics

Non-Participatory Policy: Learning from the Pati Case ■

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Worm Infections and Measles Claim Children's Lives: ■
An Alarm on Indonesia's Weak Disease Prevention
Promoting Inclusive Education in Indonesia ■

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FOREWORD

The September 2025 edition of the Indonesian Update presents a series of critical analyses on political, economic, social, and legal issues that have recently been in the public spotlight.

This month's main report is titled "Characterization and the Death of Expertise: What is the Quality of Digital Activism among Indonesian Youth?". This article examines the shifting patterns of participation among young people in the digital space, as well as how characterization and the loss of expert references influence the quality of public policy discourse in Indonesia.

In the political sphere, we present an analysis on "Policy Without Participation: Learning from the Pati Case," which highlights the importance of public involvement in decision-making to ensure that public policies do not lose social legitimacy.

From an economic perspective, two key articles discuss the relationship between taxes, economic growth, and climate policy in Indonesia. Furthermore, this edition examines efforts to implement environmental justice as a strategy to mitigate ecological distribution conflicts, a crucial step towards sustainable development.

On the social side, we highlight public health issues through the report "Worms and Measles Claim Children's Lives: Alarm for Weak Disease Prevention in Indonesia," which serves as a serious warning about the weakness of the disease prevention system. Another article promotes the birth of inclusive education in Indonesia, highlighting the urgency of equal access for children with special needs.

From the legal realm, we review the Indonesian National Police's Human Rights Handbook and its practical application, and discuss the relevance of civil disobedience as a means of learning about democracy for Indonesian society.

Through this edition, the Indonesian Update remains committed to being a space for critical reflection and a means of enriching public discussion. We invite readers to not only understand policy issues superficially but also examine their implications for social, economic, and democratic life in Indonesia.

Enjoy reading.

Main Report

Characterization and the Death of Expertise: What is the Quality of Digital Activism Among Indonesian Youth?

-Felia Primaresti-



The development of digital technology over the past two decades has transformed the way we understand public space and the practices of citizenship. While citizen participation was once understood primarily through formal activities such as elections, community organizations, or street demonstrations, young people are now emerging with a new model: digital activism. Social media has become an arena where their voices resonate, issues are voiced, and solidarity is built. This phenomenon challenges old concepts of citizenship and opens up the possibility of new models of *citizenship practices* in the digital age.

The younger generation is known as *digital natives*, having grown up with the internet, familiar with social media, and highly creative in using technology. Their digital activism is diverse: from recent *hashtag campaigns* like *#ResetIndonesia* and *#EmergencyWarning*, to *online petitions* urging the passage of laws, to educational content on TikTok and Instagram on environmental issues, gender, and democracy. These activities are often seen as “lighthearted” or “just a trend,” but in fact, they have significantly influenced public opinion and even put pressure on state actors.

From a citizenship perspective, this demonstrates that political participation is no longer limited to the formal realm. Young people are redefining what it means to be citizens in their own ways, through clicks, posts, and digital networks.

This paper shall attempt to examine how this transformation shapes the practice of *digital citizenship*, by exploring the opportunities it presents for democracy as well as the challenges it brings.

From Classic *Citizenship* to Digital *Citizenship*

The classical theory of *citizenship*, as proposed by T.H. Marshall (1949), divides it into three basic dimensions: civil rights, political rights, and social rights. However, in the digital era, these dimensions have evolved in new directions. Citizens demand not only formal rights but also space to express their identity, culture, and aspirations through digital media. Friedland (1996) proposes a new concept called “*Electronic Democracy*,” where the development of communication technology, especially the internet, is considered capable of changing the way citizens participate in democracy. According to him, *electronic democracy* is an opportunity to overcome the crisis of political participation and citizens’ alienation from democratic institutions.

Within Friedland’s framework, a new term emerged, the so-called *new citizenship*. In this context, citizens can become producers of discourse, not simply consumers of information. Citizens, especially young people, can easily create *Twitter threads*, *TikTok content*, or *memes* that shape public discourse faster than academic studies or civil society organizations.

This allows citizens broader access to political information, providing a two-way communication channel between the government and citizens. Interestingly, these digital actions often transcend geographical boundaries. The *#BlackLivesMatter* issue; for example, (The Conversation, July 9, 2020), also attracted widespread response from young Indonesians who linked it to issues of discrimination within the country. This demonstrates that digitalization has expanded the meaning of citizenship from merely national to transnational.

This aligns with Ribble (2015), who argues that *digital citizenship* encompasses literacy, ethics, responsibility, and participation in the digital world. Young Indonesians demonstrate these practices in various ways. Thus, they are not merely social media users but also active political actors.

Lee (2024), in his research, emphasizes that *transformational leadership* can influence *citizenship behavior* through two mechanisms: *trustworthiness* and *trust* in the leader. This finding is relevant in the context of digital movements. On the one hand, credible leadership is clearly important. If a movement is led by a trusted figure, it can be better organized, have a strong driving force,

and build broad solidarity. However, on the other hand, there are serious risks when public trust is placed in figures who lack substantial capacity or in-depth understanding of the issue.

This phenomenon often gives rise to *performative activism*; namely, activism that is more oriented towards image and trends than structural change (Thimsen, 2022). In the Indonesian context, we see how some *influencers* or digital celebrities quickly upload content related to popular issues, “*riding the wave*” of popular issues, thus easily gaining public attention and legitimacy. Meanwhile, the voices of civil society members or experts who have long worked on the issue are often drowned out because they often respond to issues through in-depth analysis that takes longer to produce.

The practice of *digital citizenship* and the role of *influencers* go beyond audience-building skills; they must also address ethical concerns. The pressure to “ride the wave” often makes influencers lax in verifying the validity of the information they share, leading to the risk of producing content that is deviant, provocative, or even misrepresents the needs of the community on the ground (Pramesti, 2022). This situation highlights the paradox of *digital citizenship* : public trust can strengthen a movement but also potentially weaken its quality if leadership is not supported by adequate knowledge, in-depth analysis, and commitment.

On the one hand, it’s true that civil society needs to unite in addressing public issues, including by involving *influencers* with broad reach. However, it’s important to remember that each actor should still play their part. *Influencers* ideally play a role in *raising awareness* , opening the door for issues to be recognized and discussed by a wider public.

Meanwhile, the area of substance, argument formulation, policy advocacy, and long-term strategy should continue to be handled by actors with genuine knowledge, experience, and advocacy capacity. This way, the collaboration between popularity and expertise can be mutually reinforcing, not mutually negating.

This is noteworthy given that Pangrazio’s (2021) study emphasizes the role of agency in *digital citizenship*, understood as an individual’s capacity to create meaning and act in digital spaces. However, this agency cannot be separated from structural pressures that limit its scope, such as corporatization, the dominance of technology companies, and state intervention. In the context of *influencers*, this suggests that expressions of digital citizenship are often trapped within the logic of the content industry and social media algorithms, which prioritize exposure and popularity over depth of substance.

Furthermore, the *buzzer phenomenon* demonstrates how digital agencies can be reduced to instruments of political or economic interests, so practices that appear to be public participation actually reproduce existing power imbalances. Thus, the presence of *influencers* and *buzzers* creates a paradox: on the one hand, they broaden the reach of civic issues, but on the other, they have the potential to shallow discourse and weaken the deliberative basis essential to democracy.

Challenges and Limitations

In addition to the concerns outlined above, youth digital activism faces other risks, such as polarization caused by social media algorithms that create *echo chambers*, a term used to describe a situation where a person is only exposed to information, views, or opinions that align with their own beliefs. Hoaxes and disinformation also pose serious threats. Furthermore, digital repression, ranging from the vague provisions of the ITE Law, *buzzer attacks*, to *doxing practices*, limits the safe space for young people to speak out. Another challenge is the gap in internet access and digital literacy, which leads to unequal participation.

Furthermore, another important consideration is the phenomenon of “The Death of Expertise,” as Tom Nichols (2017) wrote in his book. This is crucial because youth digital activism often operates in a public space that tends to obscure the authority of knowledge. When everyone feels their opinion is equal to research-based knowledge, the quality of public discourse risks declining.

Even young people active in the digital realm can become trapped in a culture of *anti-intellectualism*, where personal opinions dominate over academically or empirically tested arguments. Consequently, digital advocacy efforts can lose their strong epistemic footing, easily undermined by counter-narratives or even swept up in the tide of disinformation.

This is further exacerbated by the phenomenon of “characterization” in digital activism, where the public tends to excessively idolize a particular figure, regardless of the validity of their arguments, as McMillin (2020) points out. This type of characterization often shifts the focus from the substance of the issue to the personalization of the discourse.

As a result, debates become shallow, placing greater emphasis on loyalty to figures than on the validity of data or critical analysis. In the context of “The Death of Expertise,” characterization exacerbates the delegitimization of the authority of knowledge, where expertise is rendered irrelevant and

criticism is perceived as a personal attack, as long as the figure is considered charismatic or capable of mobilizing the masses. This phenomenon makes the digital space vulnerable to confirmation bias and emotional polarization, which in turn undermines the quality of deliberative democracy.

Ultimately, youth digital activism presents both enormous potential and serious challenges to democracy. On the one hand, it opens up new spaces for participation that are more inclusive, creative, and transnational. However, on the other hand, it is also threatened by algorithmic logic, digital repression, the demise of expertise, and characterizations that trivialize substance. Therefore, what is needed is not simply expanding digital space, but also strengthening critical literacy, advocacy capacity, and media ethics. In this way, *digital citizenship* can truly become a medium for deepening democracy, not simply increasing *the noise* in the public sphere.

Recommendations

Referring to these findings and reflections, here are some recommendations that can be considered by various stakeholders.

- a. The government and the House of Representatives (DPR) must ensure that the ITE Law is not used to silence public expression, ensuring a safer digital space for youth activism. Constitutional Court (MK) Decision No. 105/PUU-XXII/2024 should serve as momentum for a comprehensive revision of problematic articles in the ITE Law.
- b. The government, through the Ministry of Communication and Digital, must accelerate equitable internet access and digital infrastructure in marginalized areas to reduce the gap in participation and access to information, and encourage accountability among digital *platform companies* through regulations that require algorithm transparency and personal data protection.
- c. The government, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (Kemendiksisintek), has included digital literacy, media ethics, and *civic engagement* in its education curriculum.
- d. Civil Society organizations should strengthen digital literacy by providing digital literacy programs that focus not only on technical skills, but also on ethics, information validation, and critical thinking skills.

Main Report

The development of digital technology over the past two decades has transformed the way we understand public space and citizenship practices. Social media has become an arena where young people's voices resonate, issues are raised, and solidarity is built. This phenomenon challenges old concepts of citizenship and opens up the possibility of new models of citizenship practices in the digital age.

- e. There needs to be the strengthening networks between civil society organizations, grassroots communities, academics, and digital communities (e.g., *fandoms* or *progressive influencers*) to combine popularity and substance.

Economy

The Efforts to Implement Environmental Justice in Mitigating Ecological Distribution Conflicts in Indonesia

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



Although the term ‘ecological distribution conflicts’ is not a new terminology—it was proposed by Martinez-Alier and O’Connor (1996)—this terminology remains important and continues to be discussed in several intertwined and related scientific domains, such as economics, ecological economics, environmental economics, sustainability, and others. Martinez-Alier and O’Connor (1996) in Scheidel et al. (2018) described ‘ecological distribution conflicts’ as “social conflicts arising over the unequal distribution of environmental benefits, such as access to natural resources, fertile land, or ecosystem services, as well as over unequal and unsustainable allocations of environmental burdens, such as pollution or waste.” The definition of social conflict used by Scheidel et al. (2018) is “a clash of interests, values and norms among individuals or groups that leads to antagonism and a struggle for power.”

In other words, the emergence of ecological distribution conflicts is the result of unequal environmental benefits received by the society where the wider community also bears the burden of negative externalities, for example, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and pollution due to exploited natural resources. Ecological distribution conflicts are also different from ‘economic distribution conflicts’, such as wages, taxes and prices, because the conflicts are struggles rather than valuations (Martinez-Alier, 2017).

In Indonesia and several countries that have large natural resources, the phenomenon of ecological distribution conflict has occurred. Therefore, this study shall aim to analyze efforts to implement environmental justice in mitigating ecological distribution conflicts in Indonesia, as well as provide policy recommendations for the administration of President Prabowo Subianto.

The Emergence and Definition of Environmental Justice

The environmental justice (EJ) movement at least developed from social movements by grassroots organizations and sociological scholarship, especially in the United States (US), in the 1980s (Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2018), where the social movement was not only concerned with environmental degradation, resource extraction, and waste disposal in the distribution of environmental benefits and costs, but also about recognizing group identities and their participation in decision making. (Martinez-Alier, 2017).

Holifield, Chakraborty, and Walker (2018) explained that the terminology of environmental justice and environmental injustice has largely developed and is not rooted in one specific definition. These two definitions have various functions, for example, as descriptive terminology for conditions that can be observed and measured, as normative terms for current conditions and expectations for desired results in the future, as political terms, activism mobilization, and policy advocacy (Walker, 2012, in Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2018). Moreover, the form of “justice for whom” is also a discussion considered in the definition of environmental justice/injustice.

In the current scope of economic justice, experts also discuss and theorize regarding ‘fairness’ in environmental justice. Apart from distributive justice, currently environmental justice research is increasingly developing to include elements of procedural justice and participatory justice, justice as recognition, justice as capabilities and the interrelationship of these dimensions of justice (Schlosberg, 2007; Walker, 2012; in Holifield, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2018).

Some Examples of Ecological Distribution Conflicts and the Efforts to Implement Environmental Justice in Mitigating Ecological Distribution Conflicts in Indonesia

Martinez-Alier (2017) argues that the emergence of ecological distribution conflicts or socio-environmental conflicts encourages the concept of creating and implementing environmental justice. As stated by Martinez-

Alier and O'Connor (1996) in Scheidel et al. (2017), ecological distribution conflict is “social conflicts arising over the unequal distribution of environmental benefits, such as access to natural resources, fertile land, or ecosystem services, as well as over unequal and unsustainable allocations of environmental burdens, such as pollution or waste.” In looking at ecological distribution conflicts or socio-environmental conflicts in Indonesia, this article uses information from the Atlas of Environmental Justice (EJAtlas) which can be accessed at <https://ejatlas.org/>.

As of this writing, there have been at least 141 reported cases of ecological distribution conflicts or socio-environmental conflicts in Indonesia. Following Martinez-Alier (2017), several examples of ecological distribution conflicts in Indonesia are as follows:

1. **The Masela Block and Abadi LNG**

On the EJAtlas website (accessed September 9, 2025), INPEX, the main operator of the Abadi LNG project, claims that the Carbon, Capture, Storage (CCS) used in the project can neutralize carbon dioxide emissions from the resulting gas production. However, there are concerns and resistance regarding the use of this technology.

The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI) petition entitled “Stop Extending the Life of Fossil Fuels and Destroying the Environment and Livelihoods in Indonesia,” cites previous cases, such as the Tangguh LNG project, which also involved INPEX, as evidence of the negative impacts caused by CCS projects when local communities are not included in environmental decision-making (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

In Tangguh, environmental impact analyzes appear to have failed to involve the community, resulting in the destruction of ecologically sensitive areas such as mangrove forests and coastal areas, restrictions on fishing activities, and the eviction of three indigenous tribes, who lost access to their ancestral lands, agricultural land, and hunting (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

In 2020; for example, there was an Indonesian government official who stated that the land where the Masela Block assets were located belonged to the state. He also said that the Maluku indigenous people were “those” who claimed their customary land was in a forest area, and again, the land was said to be state property according to government data (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

Despite these claims, two years later, the Nustual community of the Tanimbar Islands filed a complaint with the President's Office because they objected to the compensation price offered for the land, after which the Saumlaki District Court determined appropriate compensation. INPEX then filed an appeal to the Supreme Court which ultimately overturned the decision of the Saumlaki District Court by returning the compensation price to its original value (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

2. The Gold and Copper Mining in Beutong Ateuh

The Beutong Ateuh community has long opposed gold mining operations by several companies, which threaten their livelihoods and the Leuser Ecosystem they live in. As one of the largest and most important protected areas in Indonesia, the Leuser Ecosystem is designated as a National Strategic Area, which is home to a variety of ecosystems. Beutong Ateuh also has the very clear Meureubo River, which is a source of livelihood for the Beutong Ateuh community. Apart from that, the river is also used for irrigation, fishing and other activities where riverside communities really protect the river from various water contamination (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

PT Emas Mineral Murni (EMM) was granted a mining permit by the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) on June 16, 2006. From the start, the local community firmly rejected PT EMM's gold mining plans in the area. They are worried that the mining plan will release hazardous waste and pollute their waters, which incidentally is their livelihood (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

Protests occurred during 2013-2019 where PT EMM's mining permit was revoked in 2021. However, new mining companies emerged to mine minerals in Beutong Ateuh. Until now, the community rejects mining practices in this area because it disrupts community livelihoods, without community participation, and disrupts environmental conditions around the mining area (EJAtlas, accessed September 9, 2025).

Based on the explanation of examples of ecological distribution conflicts or social-environmental conflicts in Indonesia above, the implementation of environmental justice in Indonesia requires at least elements of justice, namely distributive justice, procedural justice, recognition justice and restorative justice. This is because ecological distribution conflicts can be driven by political interests which widen the gap in power inequality between government and society, lack of community inclusion or

participation in the policy cycle, and the elimination of responsibility in enforcing environmental regulations that only focus on economic growth.

Therefore, policy recommendations are needed that can encourage the implementation of these four types of justice in order to mitigate ecological distribution conflicts in Indonesia.

Policy Recommendations

First, in encouraging the implementation of distributive justice, where this justice refers to “a fair distribution of burdens and benefits across geographic areas and populations” (carbon-direct.com, August 3, 2023), all elements of government from the central level to the village level must be able to encourage policies that prioritize vulnerable communities and implement environmental policies, such as carbon taxes, for companies that produce high carbon emissions, and allocate revenue from the carbon tax for environmental mitigation and adaptation by the communities and regions where the companies are located.

Second, in encouraging procedural justice, where this justice shows “meaningful involvement of affected communities as stakeholders in the decision-making process” (carbon-direct.com, August 3, 2023), all elements of government from the central level to the village level must be able to strengthen Environmental Impact Analysis (AMDAL) based on the principles of justice and require policy stakeholders before project implementation to include indigenous communities and other communities. Apart from that, all government elements can encourage digitalization, open access, and provide real-time access so that it can be easily monitored by the public.

Third, in promoting recognition justice, where this justice “takes into account the social, historical and cultural context of a geography or population, and how that context determines the relationship of that geography or population to power” (carbon-direct.com, August 3, 2023), all elements of government from the central level to the village level must be able to integrate local wisdom and customary law into policies related to the environment and livelihoods of regional communities, as well as strengthen the relevant institutions and institutions advocating for the rights and participation of regional policy makers.

Fourth, in encouraging restorative justice, where this justice “directly responds to historical damage, and through fair decision making and participation, facilitates opportunities to improve health, safety and

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Implementation of environmental justice in Indonesia requires at least elements of distributive justice, procedural justice, recognition justice and restorative justice in mitigating and handling ecological distribution conflicts or socio-environmental conflicts in Indonesia. All elements of government from the central level to the village level must be able to collaborate, synergize and encourage optimal implementation of these elements of justice.

environmental conditions” (carbon-direct.com, August 3, 2023), all elements of government from the central level to the village level must be able to encourage polluters pay principle policies to fund ecosystem restoration and economic livelihoods of affected communities, work together with communities, civil society organizations (CSOs) related to ecosystem restoration projects to be more evidence-based, and encourage responsible institutional leadership, such as compensating for environmental damage through appropriate, fair and transparent legal channels.

Taxes, Economic Growth, and Climate Change in Indonesia

-Putu Rusta Adijaya-



Indonesia and other developing countries in the Global South face almost the same challenges; namely, maintaining and encouraging inclusive economic growth while responding to the urgency of climate change. President Prabowo Subianto has also targeted 8% economic growth during his time in office, where in Asta Cita's vision he outlines various efforts to achieve this target. However, the majority of Indonesia's economic activity is currently driven by fossil energy consumption, which has an impact on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

According to the data from Friedlingstein et al. (2023) in Adijaya (2024), if compared with 10 other ASEAN countries, Indonesia was the highest GHG emitter, and the difference with Vietnam was 1.1 percentage points. The use of coal is still the largest part of Indonesia's energy mix, starting from the extraction, transportation, processing to combustion stages, and is widely used in the industrial sector and other energy-intensive subsectors which drives the large carbon emissions produced (Adijaya, 2024).

Adijaya (2024) explains that, according to the data from Friedlingstein et al. (2023), the total amount of carbon dioxide emissions produced from coal was 1,323.64 million tons, then the total amount of carbon dioxide emissions from oil and natural gas were 824.73 million tons and 329.15 million tons respectively during the 2019-2023 period. The contribution of bricks to carbon dioxide emissions during this period was 50.88%, 31.70%

for oil, and 12.65% for natural gas. These emissions will accelerate climate change, which will lead to an increase in the number of extreme weather events in Indonesia (Adijaya, 2024).

According to an environmental economic theory, setting the ‘right’ carbon price and environmental tax reform are market-based policy instruments that are able to reduce emissions while encouraging new economic potential that leads to sustainable economic growth. A carbon tax designed based on the principle of a good policy cycle with the ‘right’ carbon tax value, driven by good management and institutional leadership will encourage competitiveness, innovation, environmentally friendly investment (IMF/OECD, 2021; Parry, September 2021).

There are at least three supporting factors why tax policy is important in achieving economic growth, as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change. First, carbon tax, as a form of Pigouvian tax, is imposed on economic activities that produce negative externalities, the aim of which is to internalize these negative externalities (Roach, Lennox, & Codur, 2019 in Adijaya, August 2025).

Second, the carbon tax provides potential revenue that can help the State Budget, which has limited fiscal capacity. The ‘right’ value of a carbon tax and sustainability tax reform could increase fiscal space to encourage economic growth; for example, through the development of public infrastructure related to resilience or climate change adaptation (OECD, 2021). Third, revenue, the environmental tax revenue process can depend on the distribution and political-economic conditions that occur (IMF/OECD, 2021).

Apart from that, there are obstacles to carbon taxes; for example, the design of the carbon tax being implemented also depends on the purpose of its imposition, the ‘right’ value to balance the social marginal benefits of society and the company’s marginal abatement costs (Cuervo & Gandhi, 1998 in Adijaya, August 2025). The ‘optimal’ carbon tax value being studied also has time-lag and impact-lag factors in its implementation (Adijaya, August 2025).

In addition, taxes related to the environment receive little political support because they are not in line with or do not serve parties who have political power (Masur & Posner, 2015). In the process of formulating policies and regulations, politically, there will be bargaining between interest groups, so what is reflected is regulations or policies that benefit a handful of elites and not the society as a whole (Adijaya, August 2025).

The Analysis of Policy Options and Their Potential Trade-Offs

In economics, every economic choice chosen will have consequences (trade-offs) because we have to sacrifice something to get something else. First, the government can pursue a carbon tax that already has legal regulations with transparent implementations and an economic scale with gradual (progressive) increases.

This policy can cover many sectors by taking into account economic conditions and environmental considerations. The consequences are time-lag and impact-lag in implementations, political considerations and political cycles, and require communication capacity and abilities that must be transparent and careful (IMF/OECD, 2021).

Second, the government can eliminate subsidies for the use of fossil fuels and align fossil fuel energy taxes with the carbon content or emissions produced. The elimination of these subsidies is carried out in order to minimize fiscal leakage due to unnecessary subsidies and reduce emissions directly and periodically. The consequence is potential disruption to energy security, political interests, and economic opportunities from fossil fuels (OECD, accessed September 10, 2025).

There are still many other policy options related to taxes to encourage economic growth and reduce the resulting emissions. However, every existing policy will face trade-offs and resistance. Both governments at the central level and the regional level must be able to diagnose, analyze policy models, monitor and evaluate existing policies in order to minimize the potential consequences or trade-offs of the policies chosen.

Policy Recommendations

In accordance with the explanations above, the following are recommendations for the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. First, the government, in this case the Ministry of Finance, in synergy with related ministries/institutions, must be able to implement the Pigouvian tax (carbon tax) in a gradual, responsible manner and with high transparency. The Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) mechanism must be integrated with Indonesia's climate targets to be achieved. The increase in carbon tax rates can later be expanded to related sectors; for example, increasing rates in accordance with the carbon emissions produced and the negative environmental impacts that have been produced.

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The government in synergy with the relevant ministries/institutions must be able to implement the Pigouvian tax (carbon tax) in a gradual, responsible manner and with high transparency. The Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) mechanism must be integrated with Indonesia's climate targets to be achieved. Regarding reform of fossil energy subsidies and adjustments to energy taxes, the government in synergy with the relevant ministries/institutions can carry out gradual elimination of fossil energy subsidies that are not on target and allocate the subsidy budget to encourage the development of renewable energy infrastructure and infrastructure for energy security and energy efficiency.

To mitigate trade-offs, consistent, calm, open public communication that educates must be carried out; for example, regarding existing time-lags and impact-lags. Encouraging the technical capacity of the bureaucracy through training, appointing technocrats or skilled individuals can also be carried out by the government.

Second, regarding reform of fossil energy subsidies and adjustments to energy taxes, the government, in this case the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), in synergy with relevant ministries/institutions could carry out gradual elimination of fossil energy subsidies that are not on target and allocate the subsidy budget to encourage the development of renewable energy infrastructure and infrastructure for energy security and energy efficiency.

To mitigate trade-offs, managing energy security risks, which also consider energy justice and environmental sustainability through diversification of new and domestic renewable energy sources, should be based on energy potential that has been mapped. Apart from that, the government must also be able to communicate evidence-based policies regarding the policies that will be implemented. The government must be able to convey direct benefits related to evidence-based policies. Building and encouraging public trust is important amidst the current economic-political-social conditions.

Civil Disobedience and Lessons for Indonesia

-Christina Clarissa Intania-



From 25 August until this article was written (September 1, 2025), Indonesia has been rocked by massive demonstrations by civilians who want fundamental changes to policies at the central level. These demonstrations began with statements that failed to address public concerns about housing allowances of Rp50 million per month for each member of the House of Representatives (DPR). Clarifying comments from several DPR members that actually validated this amount failed to provide understanding and touch the community amid the situation of drastic increases in land and building taxes in several regions (detik.com, 8/22/2025); and unemployment reaching 7.28 million people (Central Statistics Agency, 5/5/2025).

Amidst the demonstrations, many citizens called for “Stop Paying Taxes” both in the field and online through hashtags on the social media as a symbol of protest and disappointment. This movement has actually been voiced every year, but it has become more frequent during the wave of demonstrations from August to September. In 2022, Sri Mulyani also responded to this movement with the comment, “That means you don’t want to live in Indonesia, you don’t want to see Indonesia prosperous” (kumparan.com, 7/19/2022).

The movement to not pay taxes is a form of protest categorized as civil disobedience. In short, civil disobedience is a form of action that consciously refuses to comply with certain laws or policies (Martin, 1970: 123). Unlike

direct resistance through revolution or referendum, civil disobedience aims to create ripples that disrupt the implementations of laws and policies, thereby attracting the attention of policy makers.

This article shall discuss the concept of civil disobedience according to early and recent studies, its historical practices and implications in Indonesia, and what can be learned in relation to the current situation in Indonesia. Hopefully, this could serve as a lesson for the public and, if relevant, for the current situation.

The Concept of Civil Disobedience

The idea of civil disobedience was first used in 1849 by Henry David Thoreau, who criticized the war between the United States and Mexico and opposed slavery through his famous essay, which later became known as the forerunner of civil disobedience. This essay inspired movements such as the Salt March by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the civil rights movement by Martin Luther King Jr. Since then, disobedience has been recognized as a legitimate and organized form of non-violent resistance to withdraw support for the government, whether by individuals or groups (Lima, 2022: 39).

Gandhi (1903) advocated civil disobedience as one of the duties of civil society. Adding his thoughts to Thoreau's view, "But I do not ask for no government, but a better government," with his view "... This is the duty of every citizen," he emphasized that it is the duty of the civil society to speak up and demand a better government (Gandhi, 1903: 188; Lima, 2022: 41). It is Gandhi's emphasis that gives a more concrete application value and becomes an inspiration in other places (Lima, 2022: 42).

King (1963) further brought this understanding into his movement. According to him, the willingness to accept punishment for civil disobedience is a necessary thing to do. The acceptance of punishment and clear political goals are what distinguish civil disobedience with a definite moral basis from crime that violates the law without any political goals (King, 1963; Lima, 2017). Furthermore, John Rawls (1971) defines civil disobedience from the perspective of individual freedom, representative democracy, and the rule of law. According to Rawls (1971), civil disobedience must be carried out publicly, without the use of violence, and must be a deliberate violation of the law for a specific political purpose, such as to change a law. Demonstrators must be prepared to accept legal sanctions for breaking the law because civil disobedience is not a form of revolution, but a form of protest available after other efforts have failed (Rawls, 1971; Lima, 2017, 45).

Rawls (1971) argues that there are several conditions under which civil disobedience can be categorized as “legitimate,” namely: it must be peaceful, public, non-violent, have clear objectives and goals, respect the law, and accept legal sanctions. These elements are in line with those presented by Michael Walzer (1982) and Hugo Bedau (1991). However, Walzer argues that there are some situations where the use of force or even violence can still be morally justified, albeit with explanations and precautions. Therefore, the elements presented by Rawls must also be viewed in context. This is especially true for the parameters of “legitimacy” and “legitimization,” which limit the voices that attempt to be conveyed through civil disobedience (Walzer, 1982). The rule of law is an important factor in considering the practice of civil disobedience.

In its development, modern studies by Candice Delmas (2018) and Hayes & Ollitrault (2019) call for civil disobedience, which is even mandatory when faced with oppressive laws and social structures. However, William Scheuerman (2022) warns that the use of violent approaches to civil disobedience has historically been detrimental to strengthening democracy. Thus, civil disobedience within the framework of freedom, even when carried out through disruptive actions, can still be legitimate and widely accepted when it respects the law and democracy with the greater goal of benefiting the country (Berglund, 2025).

The History of Civil Disobedience in Indonesia

Indonesia itself has been familiar with civil disobedience since its resistance against Dutch colonialism as a form of changing resistance methods. One of the movements was started by Samin Surosentiko, who refused to pay taxes to the Dutch colonial government because of its policy of turning forests into state-owned companies and removing farmers from access to forests. This resistance, later known as the Samin Doctrine, was based on the principle that all humans are equal and no one has the right to be superior to another, thus rejecting differences in status and strongly opposing colonialism (Trisnova, 2010). From there, meetings, demonstrations, boycotts, organized movements, and so on began (Lane, 2008; Saenong, 2024). However, Samin Surosentiko was eventually arrested by the Dutch colonial government in 1907 and sent to exile in Padang (Hutomo, 1996).

Many other civil disobedience movements followed. During the Old Order, one of the largest acts of disobedience was carried out by students known as the Student Movement in 1966. This movement was a form of protest against poor social and economic conditions, inequality due to injustice, policies that did not reflect justice, causing public dissatisfaction, and an

undemocratic government. This movement eventually gave rise to the Three Demands of the People and brought down the leadership of President Soekarno (Hasudungan, 2020; Damayanti, 2022).

At the end of the New Order era, the 1998 Reformation was also one of the largest forms of civil disobedience in the Indonesian history. Although accompanied by various tragedies of violence and destruction, this movement succeeded in bringing down President Soeharto's government. The 1998 Reform demanded many things, such as the rule of law; the eradication of corruption, collusion, and nepotism; the trial of President Soeharto and his cronies; constitutional amendments; the revocation of the dual function of the Indonesian National Army/Indonesian National Police; and the granting of maximum regional autonomy (Prasisko, 2016).

Civil Disobedience After the Reform

In the post-1998 Reform era, demonstrations were carried out with restrictions in the hope of not repeating the peak of the 1998 Reform. Demonstrations such as the 2012 Fuel Price Increase Demonstration, the 2019 Criminal Code Demonstration, the 2021 Labor Demonstration, and most recently, the August-September 2025 Demonstration. Compared to the defiance during the Old Order and New Order eras, awareness of the law, especially in the exercise of freedom of expression by civil society and security by the authorities, has become the basis that each party must understand in carrying out demonstrations, with a series of laws and regulations governing them. However, in practice, there are still several indications of violence and damage. In fact, 10 people died during the August-September 2025 demonstrations (bbc.com, 3/4/2012; news.detik.com, 31/12/2019; hukumonline.com, 31/12/2021; bbc.com, 3/9/2025).

From the demonstrations above, the Fuel Price Increase Demonstration resulted in the postponement of the fuel price increase policy (bbc.com, March 31, 2012). The fuel price increase only took place in 2013 after the postponement (tempo.co, June 21, 2013). Similarly, the 2019 Criminal Code Bill (RKUHP) protests were eventually responded to with the postponement of the RKUHP's ratification (nasional.kompas.com, 24/12/2019). The RKUHP was enacted in 2023. However, in the case of the 2021 Labor Protests, no strategic actions were taken to address the demands of the protesters.

The Future of Civil Disobedience in Indonesia

In relation to the most recent demonstrations; namely, the August-September 2025 demonstrations, there were several demands that were processed by the people's representatives and the government, although not all of them were accommodated. Examples include restructuring DPR allowances, replacing several ministers, and visiting and providing assistance to victims (nasional.kompas.com, 5/9/2025; news.detik.com, 9/9/2025; setneg.go.id, 29/8/2025; tempo.co, 30/8/2025).

Referring back to the concept of civil disobedience discussed earlier, the August-September 2025 demonstrations reflected the demonstrators' efforts to respect the law and their clear objectives. The parameters regarding what is considered the boundary between civilized or uncivilized actions, and their proportionality, are also increasingly blurred. Not only that, there is a blurred line regarding whether or not there is intentional violation of the law.

Referring to the demands made, restructuring how the Indonesian government works has become the main demand. It can be said that this demand is very fundamental and will have an impact on the future of the nation. Judging by the massive public movement in various cities, it is clear that there is a great urgency for change.

Walzer's (1982) and Bedau's (1991) understanding of the legitimacy of demonstrators' actions, which should be adjusted to the urgency of the situation as justification, was tested in the August-September 2025 demonstrations. During these demonstrations, there were incidents such as the looting of officials' homes and clashes with the authorities (hukumonline.com, 29/8/2025; bbc.com, 1/9/2025). These incidents have raised questions about the extent to which the civil society can be legitimized as part of efforts to promote the desired goals.

At the same time, the ambiguity of what actions can be legitimized raises legal issues. Expressing opinions in public is a practice of freedom of expression that is protected as a human right under the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights. Its implementations are also regulated in Law Number 9/1999 concerning Freedom of Expression in Public. Therefore, it should be clear that the practice of expressing opinions in public does not violate the law at all.

However, in practice, there are legal loopholes and special situations where demonstrations in public and in the digital realm, which were initially considered legal, are deemed illegal. An example is President

Prabowo's treasonous statement regarding the August-September 2025 demonstrations, which he considered "illegal" (presidenri.go.id, 1/9/2025). Another example is the detention of activists suspected of being the masterminds behind the riots due to their posts on social media (kompas.id, 3/9/2025).

Under normal circumstances, our laws already face challenges in the form of inconsistent applications and interpretations. An example directly related to freedom of expression is Law Number 1/2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 11/2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, which is often a topic of debate. Various criminalizations of opinions and criticism in the name of hate speech and defamation have been carried out by exploiting the ambiguous wording of the relevant articles. Then there is the definition of treason in the Criminal Code, which is still in force today and has great potential to criminalize criticism of the government.

The demonstrations in August-September 2025 proved the initial concerns expressed during the demonstrations; namely, how fragile our laws are. Even in normal situations, the law is often bent for certain interests, and in critical situations, it is even easier to abuse. If we want to stick to the concept of civil disobedience, the rule of law is an important component because civilians who choose to break the law must accept the legal consequences. However, if the law is unclear and inconsistent, it is unfair for civilians who do not even attempt to break the law but are considered to have done so. The concept of civil disobedience becomes confusing and is actually vulnerable to being categorized by the state as a criminal act, as Martin Luther King Jr. avoided in his discussion at the beginning.

Recommendations

Referring to the above discussion, the following points can be recommended:

- a. The Indonesian National Police must release all those detained without due process of law during the August-September 2025 demonstrations;
- b. The President needs to review the treasonous statements that were issued;
- c. The House of Representatives, together with the Ministry of Law and

Laws

The August-September 2025 demonstrations proved the initial concerns expressed during the demonstrations, namely how fragile our laws are.

the Ministry of Human Rights, needs to revise provisions that could limit freedom of expression and that could be misused to criminalize civil liberties in the Criminal Code and other regulations; and

- d. All levels of society, law enforcement officials, and ministries or government agencies must consistently implement Constitutional Court Decision No. 105/PUU-XXII/2024 regarding the clarification of the limits of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law and No. 7/PUU-XV/2017, which emphasizes that treason is not a tool to silence opinion.

Laws

The Indonesian National Police's Human Rights Pocket book and Its Implementation

-Christina Clarissa Intania-



The Indonesian National Police (Polri) has a series of duties to protect the community and maintain order and security. However, this failed to be seen when Affan Kurniawan, a civilian, died in a riot caused by the actions of some members of the Mobile Brigade Corps (Brimob) using an armored vehicle. According to Law Number 2/2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, human rights must be applied in the implementations of Polri's duties and functions.

Over time, the National Police has collaborated with other parties to develop knowledge and capabilities in carrying out duties in accordance with human rights. An example of this is the collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM). This collaboration has taken many forms, such as training for Polri members (konnasham.go.id, 17/11/2024). Not only that, a practical Human Rights Pocket Book has also been created for Polri members to use in carrying out their duties.

This article shall explore in more detail how the Human Rights Pocket Book regulates the approach to civil society during riots and the challenges faced so far in its use.

The National Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Handbook

Komnas HAM, in collaboration with the Indonesian National Police, has published several Pocket Books for several units within the Indonesian National Police; namely for: the Mobile Brigade Corps, the Detention and Evidence Unit, the Public Order Unit, and the Investigation Unit. The first Human Rights Pocket Book was launched in 2016, while the most recent one was in 2019 for the Mobile Brigade Corps. As explained earlier, this Pocket Book was also published in conjunction with training on a human rights approach, as part of Komnas HAM's human rights education efforts.

The Mobile Brigade Corps Human Rights Pocket Book contains discussions on the Indonesian National Police and human rights; the applications of human rights in the duties, functions, and roles of the Indonesian National Police Mobile Brigade Corps; and legal protection for members of the Indonesian National Police. At the beginning of this Human Rights Pocket Book, it is emphasized that the actions taken by the Mobile Brigade Corps must be in accordance with the principles of necessity, proportionality, and legality while still respecting human rights. Brimob must respect and protect human dignity and enforce the law in the context of promoting, protecting, enforcing, and fulfilling human rights for all humanity. Brimob is required to immediately report any actions that violate the law, code of ethics, and principles in the promotion, protection, enforcement, and fulfillment of human rights (Komnas HAM, 2019).

The Human Rights Pocket Book also explains that Brimob, which is part of the National Police, is a law enforcement agency that represents the state. According to Article 4 letter d of the Chief of Police Regulation Number 8/2009 concerning the Implementations of Human Rights Principles and Standards in the Performance of the Duties of the Indonesian National Police, it is explained that "the protection, promotion, respect, and fulfillment of human rights are the responsibility of the state, especially the government." It also elaborates on the types of human rights violations, namely by omission (negligence) or by commission (intervention) (Komnas HAM, 2019).

This Pocket Book also emphasizes that Brimob, considering its duties, functions, and roles, is a unit that is vulnerable to being labeled as a perpetrator of human rights violations if Brimob Polri does not carry out its duties in accordance with applicable police rules and codes of ethics. riot control (PHH), counterterrorism and high-level domestic security, bomb disposal, and chemical, biological, and radioactive disposal. This article will focus on PHH (Komnas HAM, 2019).

In PHH, the following steps must be taken according to the Human Rights Handbook:



Source: National Police Chief Regulation No. 1 of 2009 concerning Stages of Use of Force in Police Actions and Protocol 1 of 2010 concerning Anti-Anarchism; Komnas HAM, 2019.

In PHH, an important point related to the safety of others that must be considered is that it is prohibited to use violence that is not in accordance with procedures and it is prohibited to commit acts of persecution against the community. Brimob is obliged to protect the lives, bodies, and property of people/demonstrators who have surrendered. In carrying out their duties, Brimob needs to ensure that unnecessary casualties or damage are minimized. It is also prohibited to commit acts of violence under the pretext of public interest or to quell riots (Komnas HAM, 2019).

In relation to human rights violations committed by Brimob, several points must be addressed (Komnas HAM, 2019):

- a. All actions and deeds of Brimob must be transparent and accountable to the public;
- b. Effective internal and external oversight mechanisms must be implemented to effectively control the behavior of police officers;
- c. Brimob Polri personnel who commit human rights violations, whether intentionally or unintentionally, must immediately report to their superiors;

- d. The handling of human rights violations committed by the Police Mobile Brigade Corps (Brimob) must be carried out immediately, professionally, transparently, and impartially;
- e. Superiors must be held accountable for human rights violations committed by their subordinates, whether they were aware of the violations or should have been aware but failed to take action; and
- f. The Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) has immunity from prosecution or disciplinary action for refusing orders from superiors that violate the law.

A Human Rights Pocket Book and Its Applications

From the above description, these are just a few important points that can be gleaned from other more specific provisions. The Human Rights Pocket Book is a comprehensive and communicative guide to operational implementations. However, questions arise when Brimob officers are still found to commit acts of violence in the field, especially when driving the armored vehicles and taking someone's life. If we recall the types of human rights that cannot be taken away from a person, one of them is the right to life. This was confirmed by the Commissioner for Monitoring and Investigation of the National Human Rights Commission, Saurlin P. Siagian (*tempo.co*, 2/9/2025). The Indonesian Komnas HAM has stated that the Brimob member who ran over Affan Kurniawan has been dismissed (*cnnindonesia.com*, 8/9/2025).

The Human Rights Pocket Book, which is already available, should serve as a guide. However, in reality, not all members of the Indonesian National Police understand or even have access to the Human Rights Pocket Book. This was found in a study by the Indonesian Institute, Center for Public Policy Research (2025) in a study related to other aspects of human rights; namely, academic freedom. This was explained by a source from the Metro Jaya Regional Police (Polda Metro Jaya) in the study (The Indonesian Institute, 2025).

Not only that, the human rights education that has been in place as a result of collaboration with Komnas HAM has not been able to reach all Polri personnel. Polri members range from Polri to Resort Police, and also consist of many units, one of which is Brimob (The Indonesian Institute, 2025). This is in line with the statement from National Police Commission (Kopolnas) Commissioner Poengky Indarti (2/2021), who said that at various levels of Polri education, members do not really understand human

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rights. Previously, it was taught as two credit units (kompas.id, 24/2/2021). Given these challenges, it makes sense that the actual practice in the field is also not consistently implemented.

Recommendations

Referring to the above discussion, the following points can be recommended:

- a. The Indonesian National Police must take firm actions against its other members who also committed other human rights violations during the August-September 2025 demonstrations;
- b. Komnas HAM needs to further monitor other human rights violations committed by the members of the Indonesian National Police during the August-September 2025 demonstrations that are not yet known to the public so that they can be followed up in a transparent and accountable manner by the Indonesian National Police;
- c. The Ministry of Human Rights, together with the National Police Commission, need to reevaluate the effectiveness of the human rights approach taken by the Indonesian National Police in the long term;
- d. The National Police needs to start prioritizing its budget for human rights education and training so that more of its members can access it; and
- e. Cooperation between the Indonesian National Police and Komnas HAM regarding human rights education needs to be expanded to reach more members of the Indonesian National Police.

Non-Participatory Policy: Learning from the Pati Case

-Arfianto Purbolaksono-



Early August 2025 marked a significant turning point in the political dynamics of Pati Regency, Central Java. At that time, thousands of Pati Regency residents held a mass demonstration to reject the Pati Regency Government's (Pemkab) policy of increasing the Rural and Urban Land and Building Tax (PBB-P2) by up to 250 percent. This policy was taken with the rationale of increasing Regional Original Income (PAD), which was considered stagnant. According to the Pati Regency Government data, PBB revenues over the past 14 years have only been around Rp 29 billion per year, far lower than Jepara Regency's Rp 75 billion and Kudus Regency's Rp 50 billion per year (humas.patikab.go.id/, 18/5/2025).

The rejection of the PBB-P2 increase further sparked socio-political unrest in Pati. Thousands of residents from various walks of life took to the streets from August 10 to 13, 2025. The United Pati Community Alliance claimed the number of demonstrators reached tens of thousands (bbc.com, August 7, 2025). This peaceful mass demonstration grew even though Pati Regent Sudewo had announced the policy's cancellation on August 8, 2025 (kompas.com, 8/8/2025).

The wave of demonstrations demonstrated that the issue extends beyond the tax increase, but also the way the policy was formulated. The policy-making process was deemed non-transparent, non-participatory, and lacked involvement from the Regional Representative Council (DPRD).

Meanwhile, the Pati DPRD only reacted after the demonstrations and major unrest by forming a special committee (pansus) to investigate (dprd.patikab.go.id, 16/8/2025).

The unrest in Pati even prompted the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) to ask the Central Java Provincial Government to assist and oversee the Pati Regency Government's policies, which have sparked controversy and resistance from its own residents (metrotvnews.com, 7/8/2025).

The dynamics of local politics in Pati reveal an increasingly relevant paradox in the era of regional autonomy. On the one hand, the local government has the legal legitimacy to regulate fiscal policy in accordance with Law No. 1/2022 concerning Central and Regional Financial Relations. However, on the other hand, these policies have lost their democratic legitimacy due to the neglect of public participation. Therefore, this paper shall examine the policy-making process, particularly policies related to the PBB-P2 (land tax) system, which are considered to have minimal citizen participation and poor communication from the Regent, leading to unrest in Pati.

Public Discourse Influences Legitimacy

Referring to the issues above, the limited space for citizen participation and poor communication have raised questions about Sudewo's legitimacy as Regent. The resulting wave of demonstrations could be interpreted as a form of non-institutional correction due to the failure of public discourse.

According to Jürgen Habermas, public discourse can influence the legitimacy of power. This is because public discourse enables the public to participate in decision-making and influence policy, thus impacting the legitimacy of power in a democratic system (Tobing, in Zakiyah et al., 2024).

In Habermas's theory, public discourse consists of three main components: communication, participation, and consensus. Communication is the process of sharing information and ideas between individuals and groups. Participation is the process of participating in decision-making and influencing policy. Consensus is the result of communication and participation, where society reaches agreement and influences policy (Prasetyo in Zakiyah et al., 2024).

According to Habermas's perspective, in the Pati case, residents' resistance stemmed not only from objections to the tax increase. Rather, their anger stemmed from feeling they had no voice. The collapse of legitimacy stemmed from the government's failure to provide a space for inclusive

public participation and communication, and the lack of a consensus within the community regarding the PBB-P2 increase policy.

The Implications for Local Democracy

The Pati case clearly illustrates that regional tax issues are not merely fiscal technicalities, but they also touch upon fundamental aspects of local democracy. The dynamics that emerged demonstrate how the absence of public participation in public policy formulation can have serious consequences for legitimacy, public trust, and the quality of democracy at the regional level.

First, the Pati case demonstrates that formal legality is not synonymous with democratic legitimacy. The Pati Regency Government actually has a strong legal basis for increasing the PBB-P2 (land tax). The fiscal autonomy granted through Law No. 1/2022 explicitly grants local governments the authority to regulate taxes and levies. However, the policy's procedural legitimacy is apparently insufficient to guarantee social acceptance. The massive demonstrations that occurred after the policy was announced confirmed that the public did not view the policy as part of a consensus, but rather as a unilateral, coercive decision. This demonstrates the gap between legality and legitimacy, which, if left unchecked, could weaken the foundations of local democracy.

second, the absence of public participation erodes public trust in local democratic institutions. In a democratic system, participation is not merely an accessory, but a prerequisite for the creation of legitimate policies. By not involving the public in the formulation of the PBB-P2 increase, the Pati regional government has closed the deliberation space that should have provided an arena for citizens to voice objections or suggestions. When formal channels are closed, the public ultimately resorts to non-institutional means, namely, street demonstrations, to express their dissatisfaction. This demonstrates that a deficit in participation directly impacts a deficit in public trust. If this pattern continues, local democracy will lose its vitality as citizens no longer view political institutions as effective channels for their aspirations.

Third, the Pati case demonstrates the weakness of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). As a regional legislative body, the DPRD should be the primary channel for channeling public aspirations and overseeing local government. However, in this case, the DPRD only reacted after the crisis broke, activating its right of inquiry. This response demonstrates that the DPRD is more reactive than proactive. This weakness

in its representative function is dangerous for local democracy, as it reveals a distance between representatives and their constituents. If the DPRD fails to fulfill its representative role, citizens will increasingly lose trust, not only in the local government but also in the legislative institution that is supposed to protect their interests.

Fourth, the central government's vertical correction mechanisms demonstrate that local democracy is not yet fully mature. An evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Central Java Provincial Government demonstrated the need for top-down intervention when local governments fail to manage policy processes democratically.

On the one hand, this is positive because it demonstrates the existence of checks and balances within a hierarchical system of government. However, on the other hand, it also demonstrates that local democracy remains fragile, relying on vertical oversight rather than self-correcting through citizen participation and the representative function of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). If this situation persists, regional autonomy will tend to be purely technocratic, without strengthening substantive democratic capacity at the local level.

Fifth, the long-term impact of a policy pattern without participation is a broader crisis of political trust. The Pati case should be read as an early warning for many other regions in Indonesia. If similar practices occur again—where local governments create legally valid technocratic policies but lack participation—the public could become increasingly apathetic toward democratic institutions.

Furthermore, this crisis of confidence could escalate into a delegitimization of the democratic system itself. In other words, a single non-participatory fiscal policy in a district could have serious implications for the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia as a whole.

The implications above demonstrate that the Pati case is not merely a local controversy over regional taxes, but a reflection of the structural challenges in Indonesian local democracy. The absence of participation, weak representation by the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), and reliance on vertical corrections from the central government demonstrate that local democracy remains procedural and not yet fully substantive. Substantive democracy can only be achieved if citizens are viewed not merely as objects of policy but as active subjects in the formulation and decision-making process.

The Pati case is not merely a local polemic over regional tax, but a reflection of the structural challenges in Indonesia's local democracy. The absence of participation, weak representation by the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), and reliance on vertical corrections from the central government demonstrate that local democracy remains procedural, not yet fully substantive. Substantive democracy can only be achieved if citizens are seen not merely as objects of policy but as active subjects in the decision-making and formulation process.

Recommendations

The Pati case demonstrates that a policy-making process without participation is a ticking time bomb for democracy. A key lesson from Pati is that democracy cannot rely solely on legal procedures. True legitimacy only emerges when the public is engaged in discourse and has the space to influence policy. Without participation, even technocratic fiscal policies will lead to political crises. To prevent a similar situation from recurring, several recommendations could be implemented.

First, to require public consultation in the formulation of fiscal policy. Draft Regional Tax Regulations must undergo public review and hearings involving affected residents. Second, integrate fiscal issues into the Regional Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang). Musrenbang discusses not only development spending but also regional revenue, including taxes and levies.

Third, to develop digital participation channels. Regional governments need to provide online tax calculators, complaint channels, and online consultation forums to increase transparency. Fourth, to strengthen the role of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). The DPRD must proactively carry out its representative function by gathering input from the policy planning stage. Fifth, layered evaluation by the central government. The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Finance need to oversee the implementations of regional fiscal policies to ensure they are not only legally valid but also democratically legitimate.

Social

Worm Infections and Measles Claim Children's Lives: An Alarm on Indonesia's Weak Disease Prevention

-Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi-



Sumber Foto: haibunda.com

The death of Raya, a child in Sukabumi, West Java, due to an infection of three kilograms of roundworms, and the death of 17 children in Sumenep due to measles last August have caused deep sorrow and demonstrated the weakness of disease prevention efforts in Indonesia. Without fundamental evaluation and reform, such preventable deaths will continue to occur. Weak public education and the absence of a supportive ecosystem for preventive health services have put individuals with limited access at even greater risk (Ferrara *et al.*, 2025).

Reviewing the deaths mentioned above, the failure of disease prevention is still evident in areas with low socioeconomic status, unclean environments, and anti-vaccination communities. This reflects the failure of Indonesian macro-level policies to prevent poverty, low access to education, cultural misinformation, and inadequate housing. Consequently, social, economic, and cultural determinants continue to translate into elevated health risks.

Without strong prevention policies at the macro and individual levels, marginalized communities remain highly vulnerable. Limited knowledge and financial constraints leave them unable to make healthy lifestyle choices. Raya's case illustrates this reality; her worm infection occurred due to her family's parenting practices that fell far short of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior standards, a house connected to a chicken coop, and delayed access to healthcare (BBC Indonesia, August 25, 2025).

Raya was raised by her grandmother and used to play under the house, which also served as a coop for the family's chickens. Residents interviewed by BBC Indonesia reported that Raya had repeatedly struggled to access medical treatment because of administrative barriers, including the absence of a Family Card (Kartu Keluarga) and health insurance under the National Health Insurance Scheme (BPJS Kesehatan).

Her story demonstrates how macro-level policy failures directly exclude vulnerable families from their right to quality healthcare. It raises urgent questions: why did Raya's family not receive access to social protection, preventive health education, and civil registration support? The absence of these fundamental protections at the community, village, and district levels allowed Raya's life to be claimed by a disease that should have been easily preventable. This systemic failure mirrors what also occurred in Sumenep.

The deaths of 17 children in Sumenep were attributed to measles vaccination coverage that remained below 80%. Nationwide, only 72.45% of children aged 0–59 months received measles vaccination in 2024 (BPS, 2024). This rate falls well short of WHO's recommended coverage of at least 95%, the threshold required to achieve herd immunity and reduce measles transmission (WHO, 2020). Indonesia must act with urgency to protect children from the fatal risks of measles.

This low vaccination coverage is due to widespread local community opposition to vaccination, which is considered *haram* (forbidden), dangerous, and useless. Referring to these cases of worm infestation and the measles outbreak, the author shall examine the urgency of reforming Indonesia's disease prevention system and alternative approaches to prevent further child deaths from preventable diseases.

The Inequities in Disease Prevention in Indonesia

Criticizing the child mortality incidents mentioned in the previous paragraph, three main issues can be identified that hinder equal access to health services in Indonesia. First, there is still low public awareness of the importance of healthy and hygienic practices in preventing disease. A healthy lifestyle has not yet become a culture or even a choice, especially among families with low economic and educational backgrounds. Therefore, to address this, the government is obligated to protect children in vulnerable groups with comprehensive health education.

According to the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach of the WHO (2014), disease prevention policies must be integrated with policies in other sectors related to the health sector, such as education, religion, regional development, population, and media optimization. In the Indonesian context, HiAP can be applied to address the first problem by strengthening healthy and hygienic education starting from the family environment through mobile *posyandu*, embedding health promotion into religious study sessions, empowering health cadres, and utilizing Family Welfare Movement (*Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*) activities.

All of these schemes serve as a reminder that to prevent deaths from disease, all citizens must collaborate to share health-related information. Involving religious and community leaders is a priority strategy to address religious and cultural factors that hinder healthcare coverage, including education on the *halal* status and safety of vaccines for children.

In the regional development sector, regions should map areas with low sanitation indexes, such as those experienced by Raya's family. Through this mapping, houses that do not meet healthy housing standards and lack adequate sanitation can be repaired to prevent health risks for residents. A second issue hindering equal access to healthcare is the unequal coverage of the National Health Insurance and population data collection in Indonesia.

As of 2023, the National Health Insurance coverage in West Java Province, where worm infestation cases are prevalent, was 89.1% (Ministry of Health, 2023). This figure still lags 6.1% behind the national coverage (95.2%). Meanwhile, barriers to obtaining family cards and birth certificates, which are typically administrative requirements for services, are still common among Indonesians with low education, low awareness, and those working in the informal sector (Iswara and Ariyanto, 2024).

Reflecting on this data, the low coverage of National Health Insurance and family card ownership among vulnerable communities provides input for improving collaboration between BPJS Kesehatan and the Population and Civil Registration Office at the regional level. Each village government must be involved in reaching out to unregistered families and those who have not yet received information about the registration process. We must ensure that other families, like Raya's, are prevented from accessing healthcare services simply because of unresolved data collection issues. This effort is also crucial for encouraging more equitable universal healthcare coverage across Indonesia.

The third problem concerns hesitancy and refusal to vaccinate, which is still widespread in Indonesia and even in Southeast Asia (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific, 2025). This hesitancy and refusal stem from misinformation about religious teachings and the proliferation of hoaxes received by families. To address this structural problem, the WHO (2023) recommends using the Behavioural and Social Drivers of Vaccination (BeSD) framework, which identifies factors that influence hesitancy, including thoughts and feelings, social norms, personal motivations, and access barriers to healthcare.

Identify stories experienced by the community with a framework BeSD is an efficient strategy for healthcare workers and vaccination program implementers to provide user-friendly vaccination services based on grassroots issues. As a result, education can be designed with a tolerant approach to local cultural values. Widespread information dissemination about vaccine safety and its *halal* status can be achieved through the involvement of religious organizations, such as the five religious associations and youth groups in Indonesia.

In the case of Sumenep, misinformation about the *halal* status of vaccines is a matter of “thoughts and feelings” that must be addressed through religious leader-based communication and behavioral change. Healthcare workers, cadres, religious leaders, and even village government officials must understand this framework so they can listen to and understand the thoughts and feelings that influence anti-vaccination attitudes in the community. Then, their fears can be addressed through a two-pronged approach, empathy, and correcting erroneous mindsets that justify the impact of vaccination.

Indonesia can learn from the success of other countries in reducing measles prevalence and strengthening disease prevention through investing in community education with cultural and social values. Countries like India have actively partnered with religious organizations to deliver health messages during sermons, religious events, and religious study sessions. Religious leaders can promote a healthy lifestyle as a mandate of religious teachings and part of faith (Shrestha et al., 2025).

Rwanda and Ethiopia also have policies to provide capacity building for cadres to recognize signs of disease to convince infected families to immediately come to health facilities (Matrajthe et al., 2023). Providing adequate incentives for cadres is also a challenge for Indonesia as a form of appreciation for their dedication to educating the public from house to house.

Social

Disease prevention in Indonesia must be strengthened by cross-sector awareness of the importance of a clean and healthy lifestyle. Through comprehensive prevention, tens of millions of Indonesian children could be saved from the risk of life-threatening diseases. We must not allow the Indonesian health system to repeat this tragedy, as no child deserves to die from a preventable disease.

Involving cadres in community-based surveillance is also an option to ensure responsive reporting of measles and other infectious disease symptoms to prevent widespread transmission and even outbreaks. Thus, successful disease prevention stems from empowered communities with strong solidarity within the health system. Empowered and active communities that actively support one another will emerge when disease prevention programs position communities as partners and educational agents who can then disseminate health messages to those in need.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations to strengthen disease prevention in Indonesia:

- a. Local governments need to formulate HiAP-based policies that prioritize cross-sectoral collaboration that empowers targets. Communities should be given space to participate in development planning meetings to initiate collaboration and identify solutions to health education challenges on the ground.
- b. Civil society coalitions can collaborate with academics, religious leaders, and local cadres to map perceptions of vaccine resistance and barriers to healthy living. The results of this identification can inform improvements to culture-based health communication and education strategies.
- c. The Ministry of Health can collaborate with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, religious associations, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Population and Family Development to expand access to information on the importance of a healthy lifestyle, strengthen the competence of cadres, and launch a myth-fact sheet regarding healthy living behavior.

Promoting Inclusive Education in Indonesia

-Made Natasya Restu Dewi Pratiwi-



The implementation of inclusive education is a state obligation to guarantee fundamental freedoms and rights for all individuals, including persons with disabilities. The inclusive education framework mandates a system that values, supports, and provides access to learning for all individuals, regardless of their background and needs (World Bank, 2025).

Although the ideals of inclusive education are designed to end discrimination, many people with disabilities still lack the rights they deserve. According to the 2024 Indonesian Education Statistics, 17.85% of people with disabilities aged 5 years and older have never received formal education (BPS, 2024). This figure is significantly higher than the proportion of non-disabled groups who have not received education, which is only 5.04%.

Not only in terms of educational participation, but the average length of schooling for children with disabilities is also only 4.7 years. This figure remains far below the national average of 8.8 years. In fact, the elementary school completion rate for children with disabilities is only around 54%, while the national average is close to 95%. The trend of school completion at higher levels is also declining. This means that the higher the level of education, the lower the participation rate for children with disabilities. This data shows that not all people with disabilities are fortunate enough to continue their education to higher levels.

These findings require immediate follow-up to ensure that Indonesia can achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, specifically the provision of disability-friendly, gender-sensitive, and violence-free educational facilities by 2030 (UNESCO, 2025). Various forms of educational and social disparities for persons with disabilities must be addressed structurally through protective policies to guarantee their human rights.

Furthermore, Indonesia's development paradigm needs to be reconstructed to provide a space of trust and participation for people with disabilities. This space should empower them through quality education, rather than viewing them as a burden. Therefore, this paper aims to critique efforts to promote equitable access to inclusive education in Indonesia and combat the structural discrimination experienced by people with disabilities.

Inclusive Education Policies and Challenges in Indonesia

Despite the low educational participation rates for people with disabilities, Indonesia already has policies in place to promote inclusive education and protect their rights. Inclusive education regulations are outlined in the Minister of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas) Number 70/2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Potential Intelligence and/or Special Talents.

Protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is also specifically regulated in instruments such as Law Number 8/2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Through Ministerial Regulation 70/2009, local governments are mandated to create regional regulations, designate schools that provide inclusive education, conduct teacher training, build infrastructure, and fund inclusive education programs.

The Ministry of National Education's regulation also mandates that each district/city provide at least one inclusive education school in each sub-district, one special guidance teacher, and equipment to accommodate the needs of children with special needs. Despite this policy mandate, limited budget allocations and uneven regional capacity have resulted in inclusive schools being concentrated in regions with large budgets, particularly Java (SMERU Institute and UNICEF, 2024; World Bank, 2025).

In addition to budgetary challenges, other factors hinder the implementations of inclusive schools: the limited number of special guidance teachers to assist people with disabilities; the lack of disability-friendly infrastructure; limited comprehensive training for educators and families regarding disabilities; the absence of harmonized policies and terminology for various disabilities; and

the persistence of strong social stigma that restricts access to education for people with disabilities (Sari And al., 2022; Rofiah and Suhendri, 2023; World Bank, 2024; World Bank, 2025).

The implications of these barriers cannot be ignored. Children with disabilities often experience rejection in mainstream schools due to the shortage of special education teachers, who should be at the forefront of supporting disability-friendly learning processes. Families also often lack adequate information about access to inclusive education, leading them to discontinue their children's education after a certain level. Thus, the need for continuing education for families with disabilities is not considered a priority or even seen as an affordable option.

On the other hand, the curriculum implemented in inclusive schools is still not fully adapted to the specific needs of children with disabilities, partly due to limited capacity to collect data on their needs. Consequently, this hinders the distribution of technology and learning aids for all types of disabilities. Another crucial aspect that requires attention is the lack of regulatory harmonization.

In fact, harmonization is a crucial agenda to support planning, program mapping, target group categorization, needs assessment, and standardized, data-based service referrals (SMERU Institute & UNICEF, 2024). The harmonization of these regulations must also be widely promoted to ensure that every Indonesian citizen understands the diversity of disabilities, the importance of respecting their needs, eliminating discrimination, and providing information on procedures for assisting and referring people with disabilities to ongoing social, health, and educational services.

Learning from Global Practice

International experience shows that improving the quality of inclusive education is difficult to achieve without political commitment, sustained reform, and adequate resource allocation. UNESCO's Global Monitoring of Education Report (2025) notes that several countries have prioritized inclusive education through policy reforms and appropriate resource allocation. Some good practices relevant to Indonesia include those implemented by Vietnam, Portugal, and India.

Vietnam has introduced an inclusive education competency framework as part of pre-service teacher training and as a benchmark for evaluating teacher competency in supporting students with disabilities. The government has also encouraged teacher working groups to share experiences and build capacity in using technology for inclusive education implementation.

Meanwhile, Portugal requires principals to receive inclusion training and ensures the presence of an inclusion coordinator and team at the school level. This team is tasked with assessing learning barriers, conducting student safety surveys, monitoring access to disability-friendly infrastructure, and mapping student needs to ensure the curriculum is delivered contextually. Similarly, in India, school-level inclusion teams are appointed by principals, who also involve parents in carrying out their duties.

Referring to these experiences, Indonesia can adapt the school-level inclusion team mechanism and expand access to inclusion training by replicating existing good practices, such as the establishment of the Disability Services Unit (DSU) in Solo City across all schools in Indonesia.

The DSU serves as a crucial platform for expanding access to school information and special education teachers, involving parents in monitoring curriculum implementation, strengthening coordination among stakeholders, and identifying students' special needs. This enables local monitoring of inclusive education principles, empowers parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to support their education, and ensures the implementation of an inclusive curriculum based on their needs.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations to encourage an inclusive education ecosystem for people with disabilities in Indonesia:

- a. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), and local governments need to provide transparent data on the availability of inclusive schools at every level, including the facilities and disability-friendly learning aids available in Indonesia. The data could serve as a reference for budget allocation, the development of teaching technology, and the mapping of risk-based aid distribution.
- b. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, along with Teacher Training Institutions, universities, and regional education offices, need to mandate inclusive education modules in pre-service teacher training curricula. Furthermore, capacity building through mentoring, co-teaching, and teacher study groups is needed to increase educator confidence in inclusive classrooms and to provide a platform for sharing experiences across regions.

Social

Policies that exist only on paper without adequate inclusive education training, minimal public education on various disabilities, and limited disability-friendly infrastructure in schools only perpetuate the exclusion experienced by people with disabilities. It is time for inclusive education to become a development priority, because inclusive education is not just about classrooms, but also about guaranteeing the dignity and freedom of persons with disabilities to learn, be empowered, and contribute to society.

- c. The Ministry of Finance, Bappenas, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the House of Representatives (DPR), along with regional governments, need to develop an inclusive education funding scheme based on the needs of students with disabilities. This funding should include the procurement of assistive technology, incentives for Special Guidance Teachers, facility maintenance, access to social protection information, and mapping of school referrals and inclusive services. This is crucial to ensure that the quality of inclusive services does not depend solely on regional fiscal strength.
- d. Regional governments, through district/city education offices, need to establish Disability Service Units (DSUs) as centers for coordination, advocacy, and information. DSUs should also serve as liaisons between schools, government agencies, organizations, and communities to ensure the provision of inclusive services at the local level.
- e. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, civil society organizations, and the media need to initiate family education programs and anti-stigma public campaigns. These programs aim to help families of people with disabilities and the general public understand how to provide optimal support, while also building empathy and broader acceptance within society.

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