

# **Crowdfunding for inter-faith peace: youth, networked social movement, and Muslim philanthropy NGOs in contemporary Indonesia**

Bhirawa Anoraga

*Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia*

*E-mail: bhirawa.anoraga@uiii.ac.id*

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the involvement of Indonesian youth and Muslim philanthropy NGOs in the promotion of inter-faith harmony through crowdfunding. Crowdfunding or online fundraising has been rapidly growing in Indonesia. It has been used to respond to various issues, among which is religious violence. Oftentimes, when radical acts happened in Indonesia, people turned to crowdfunding to express inter-faith solidarity and support. This study draws from the concept of networked social movement to explain the characteristics of crowdfunding campaigns for inter-faith harmony. This concept highlights contemporary online movements that are spontaneous, leaderless, and temporal in nature which is distinct from the well-organized movements commonly studied by scholars. This study employs digital ethnography on campaigns that responded to religious violence in the largest crowdfunding platform in Indonesia, Kitabisa, which is complemented by interviews with the campaign initiators and Muslim philanthropy NGOs. This article argues that the characteristics of network social

movement fit with the current generation of *remaja* that is assumed to be socially apathetic and more immersed in developing themselves and consuming media. Nevertheless, despite the spontaneous and temporal tenets, the youth's inter-faith movements were able to mobilize a significant number of donations and attract Muslim NGOs that were often perceived to be sectarian to support the inter-faith campaigns. The findings of this study contribute to the studies on Indonesian youth, Islamic philanthropy, and the state of inter-faith relations in Indonesia, which was argued to be experiencing a conservative turn.

Penelitian ini mengkaji keterlibatan pemuda Indonesia dan LSM filantropi Muslim dalam mempromosikan kerukunan antaragama melalui crowdfunding. Crowdfunding atau penggalangan dana online telah berkembang pesat di Indonesia. Hal ini telah digunakan untuk merespon berbagai isu antara lain kekerasan agama. Seringkali, ketika aksi radikal terjadi di Indonesia, masyarakat beralih ke crowdfunding untuk mengekspresikan solidaritas dan dukungan antaragama. Kajian ini mengambil konsep gerakan sosial berjejaring untuk menjelaskan karakteristik kampanye crowdfunding untuk kerukunan antar umat beragama. Konsep ini menyoroti gerakan-gerakan online kontemporer yang bersifat spontan, tanpa pemimpin, dan bersifat temporal yang berbeda dari gerakan-gerakan terorganisir yang biasa dipelajari oleh para sarjana. Kajian ini menggunakan etnografi digital pada kampanye respons kekerasan agama di platform crowdfunding terbesar di Indonesia, Kitabisa, yang dilengkapi dengan wawancara dengan penggagas kampanye dan LSM filantropi Muslim. Artikel ini berargumentasi bahwa karakteristik gerakan sosial jaringan sesuai dengan generasi remaja saat ini yang diasumsikan apatis secara sosial dan lebih tenggelam dalam pengembangan diri dan konsumsi media. Meskipun demikian, meskipun bersifat spontan dan bersifat sementara, gerakan pemuda antaragama mampu memobilisasi sejumlah besar donasi dan menarik LSM-LSM Muslim yang sering dianggap sektarian untuk mendukung kampanye antaragama. Temuan penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian mengenai pemuda Indonesia, filantropi Islam, dan kondisi hubungan antaragama di Indonesia yang disinyalir sedang mengalami *conservative turn*.

**Keywords:** Youth; Social movement; Islamic philanthropy; Crowdfunding; Inter-faith

## Introduction

In an event called *Millennials Berkarya* held in October 2017 in Jakarta, a young man named Alfatih Timur or Timmy gave a presentation in front of about 50 other youths. In this presentation, he showed a presentation slide about a crowdfunding campaign promoted by Kitabisa, a crowdfunding platform in Indonesia. The campaign is titled “Public Donations for the Victims of Samarinda Church Bombing.”<sup>1</sup> It portrays a picture of a small girl about five years old who passed away in a church bombing in 2017. Timmy is one of the founders of Kitabisa, which is currently the largest crowdfunding platform in Indonesia. He used the campaign as a case to show how crowdfunding in Indonesia has been used to promote inter-faith solidarity in countering religious radicalism. The campaign itself was initiated by a Buddhist youth while the donors comprised Muslims and non-Muslims. They collected \$23,000, which was then delivered by a Muslim NGO called Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT) to the Christian beneficiaries. For Timmy, the collaboration between a Buddhist youth and a Muslim philanthropy NGO to help the Christian victims exhibits how crowdfunding has fostered inter-faith harmony in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative above demonstrates the interlink between youth, crowdfunding, Muslim philanthropy NGOs, and inter-faith engagement in Indonesia. This study discusses the connection between these factors to shed light on the current development of Islam and inter-faith relations in the country. Since undergoing democratization in 1998, Indonesia has experienced a conservative turn and the worsening of inter-faith relations.<sup>3</sup> This study argues that the current Indonesian generation has

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<sup>1</sup>Adjie Santosoputro, “Santunan Publik Bom Gereja Samarinda”, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://kitabisa.com/bomsamarinda>.

<sup>2</sup>Participatory observation in the Millennials Berkarya’s workshop ‘Talking Social’ by Kitabisa and Semen Indonesia on 18 October 2017.

<sup>3</sup>Martin van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn”*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013.

played a role in countering this trend by fostering inter-faith engagement through crowdfunding where Muslim philanthropy NGOs have followed the initiatives. Oftentimes, when religious violence went viral, Indonesian internet users, mostly young people, turned to crowdfunding to express inter-faith solidarity.

While the current youth in Indonesia and the global context have strongly been related to new media with terms such as ‘Internet generation’ or ‘e-generation,’<sup>4</sup> less is known about their involvement in inter-faith activism. The tendency of scholarly works on Indonesian youth recently often highlight their radical tendency<sup>5</sup> or their identity as *remaja*. The latter term refers to the ignorance of the millennial generation toward socio-political issues that contrasts with the previous generations of heroic youth or *pemuda*.<sup>6</sup> The current youth who grew up in the neoliberal post-New Order context is perceived to be apolitical and more immersed in self-development and consumerist youth culture.<sup>7</sup> Let alone, Indonesian Muslims, despite being moderate in Islamic orientation, generally were often regarded as a silent majority for their passive responses against inter-faith issues.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, inter-faith campaigns in crowdfunding deserve scholarly inquiry to elucidate the assumptions of youth as *remaja* and the perceived silent Muslim majority in Indonesia.

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<sup>4</sup>June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, “Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 56, Number 4 (2005), 559-577.

<sup>5</sup>See, for instance, Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Drama of Jihad: The Emergence of Salafi Youth in Indonesia”, in Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (eds.), *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in The Global South and North*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 49-62.

<sup>6</sup>Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, “From Pemuda to Remaja”, in *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*, London: Routledge, 2013.

<sup>7</sup>Ben White, “Generation and Social Change: Indonesian Youth in Comparative Perspective”, in Kathryn Robinson (ed), *Youth Identities and Social Transformations in Modern Indonesia*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, 1-22.

<sup>8</sup>Robert W. Hefner, “Civic Pluralism Denied? The New Media and Jihadi Violence in Indonesia”, in Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson (eds), *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003, 158-179.

Furthermore, the involvement of Muslim philanthropy NGOs in inter-faith initiatives also demands further investigation. As the largest Muslim population in the world, Muslim NGOs have been among the main actors in Indonesian civil society and philanthropic scene.<sup>9</sup> Since the New Order period, they have experienced modernization and professionalization in collecting, managing, and distributing Islamic charitable funds such as *zakat*, *sedekah*, and *wakaf*.<sup>10</sup> By using these funds, Indonesian Muslim NGOs provide social services in education, health, and disaster relief. Yet, they rarely engaged in the efforts of inter-faith peacemaking; besides, scholars have observed that they tended to be sectarian in their services.<sup>11</sup>

Given the background above, this study investigates the factors behind the involvement of youth and Muslim philanthropy NGOs in crowdfunding for inter-faith peace and their implications on the development of inter-faith relations in Indonesia. In understanding their involvement, this study draws from the concept of ‘networked social movement’ by Manuel Castells<sup>12</sup> to describe the inter-faith crowdfunding campaign, which, partly because of its online aspect, is argued to be different from the traditional social movements studied by scholars. Despite new media being often strongly related to social change as argued by some technological determinists,<sup>13</sup> their relationship is not always straightforward. According to Manuel Castells, new media have led to the emergence of networked social movements that are different

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<sup>9</sup>Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

<sup>10</sup>Amelia Fauzia, “Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, Islamization, and Social Justice”, *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2017), 223-236.

<sup>11</sup>Minako Sakai and M. Falikul Isbah, “Limits to Religious Diversity Practice in Indonesia: Case Studies from Religious Philanthropic Institutions and Traditional Islamic Schools”, *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 42, Number 6 (2014), 722-746.

<sup>12</sup>Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

<sup>13</sup>See, for instance, Clay Shirky, “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, The Public Sphere, and Political Change”, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 90, Number 1 (2011), 28-41.

from conventional social movements before the dawn of the Internet.<sup>14</sup> The former for instance is characterized by the following traits: spontaneous, viral, leaderless, togetherness, and aimed at changing the values of society.<sup>15</sup> The leaderless and emotional tenets, in particular, contradict the organized and strategic movements commonly referred to by ‘resource mobilization’ scholars.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Merlyna Lim describes online movements as ‘many clicks, but little sticks’ due to their spontaneous and temporal tendency.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, she also found that networked social movements could also be impactful to challenge existing power relations. The mechanism could be explained in what Asef Bayat calls ‘the strength of big numbers,’ where the Internet could facilitate diverse people to engage and make the movement viral and visible in the public sphere.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, new media have made viral messages appear frequently, which—despite a movement disappearing—could be replaced by other movements with similar messages to foster change in societal norms.<sup>19</sup> This study views crowdfunding campaigns as a kind of networked social movement with its temporal and mainly emotional drivers, yet, they have gradually mainstreamed inter-faith engagement in religiously polarizing Indonesia.

For the data, this article conducted about 20 interviews with the founders and users of Kitabisa between 2017 and 2020. Kitabisa’s users comprise donors and campaign initiators. The latter propose social

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<sup>14</sup>Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope...*

<sup>15</sup>Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope...*

<sup>16</sup>See, for instance, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 82, Number 6 (1977), 1212-1241.

<sup>17</sup>Merlyna Lim, “Many Clicks but Little Sticks: Social Media Activism in Indonesia”, in Nishant Shah, Puthiya Purayil Sneha, and Sumandro Chattapadhyay (eds.), *Digital Activism in Asia Reader*, Meson Press, 2013, 127-154.

<sup>18</sup>Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Karine Nahon and Jeff Hemsley, *Going Viral*, Polity, 2013.

programs to Kitabisa, where after being approved, the donors could select and donate their money to the campaigns. While the users of Kitabisa are mainly young people,<sup>20</sup> the platform is also used by NGOs to raise funds for their programs. This study interviewed national Muslim philanthropy NGOs such as Dompot Dhuafa, LazisMu, ACT, and Rumah Zakat to capture their responses and the impacts of the crowdfunding trend on the organizations. The interviews were complemented by digital ethnography<sup>21</sup> where I observed netizens' interactions on Kitabisa's website and public social media such as Facebook and Instagram.

This article is structured into the following sections. After this introduction, discussion will include the background of youth in Indonesia, their *pemuda* and *remaja* orientation, and their engagement with new media. Then, the article will explore the limits of religious diversity practices in Indonesia by highlighting the sectarian tendency of Muslim philanthropy NGOs. After that, the role of youth in crowdfunding campaigns, which responded to the Samarinda and Surabaya church bombings, will be highlighted. The paper will also discuss the involvement of Muslim NGOs in inter-faith campaigns and then conclude by drawing insights into the role of Muslim youth and Muslim NGOs in expressing inter-faith peace through crowdfunding in contemporary Indonesia.

### **Youth, *remaja* generation, and new media**

The concept of youth often entails contradictory meanings between changemakers and troublemakers.<sup>22</sup> On one hand, youth are seen as shouldering expectations for societal betterment in the future. On the

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<sup>20</sup>According to Vikra Ijas, the chief of marketing of Kitabisa, Kitabisa's users (donors and campaign initiators) were mostly in their 20s and 30s (interview with Vikra Ijas, Kitabisa, Jakarta, 17 October 2017).

<sup>21</sup>Heather Horst, Tania Lewis, Larissa Hjorth, John Postill, and Sarah Pink, *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice*, Sage, 2015.

<sup>22</sup>Gill Jones, *Youth*, Polity, 2009.

other hand, they are often viewed as a burden or even a threat to the authority of the older generation. Hence, they are required to be controlled.

In the context of Indonesia, these contrasting perceptions are reflected in the terms *pemuda* and *remaja*. According to Parker and Nilan, Indonesian youth are no longer aptly called *pemuda* denoting heroic youth that contributed to social changes in Indonesian history.<sup>23</sup> Instead, they more reflect *remaja*, who are more disconnected from communities than previous generations<sup>24</sup> and are more concerned about themselves and drawn more toward a consumerist culture.<sup>25</sup> The examples of *pemuda* are the '28 generation who initiated the unity of Indonesia through Sumpah Pemuda<sup>26</sup> and the '98 generation who played a role in the shifting of the authoritarian New Order to the democratic Reformasi era.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the current youth or millennial generation is more suitably described as *remaja*, who are known for their consumerism and individualism which have lured them away from civic engagement.<sup>28</sup>

This generational shift was shaped by the broader socio-economic and political transformation in Indonesia. Since the end of the New Order period in 1998, the government has gradually implemented the neoliberal approach, which has pushed young people to rely more on themselves in

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<sup>23</sup>Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, "From Pemuda to Remaja", in *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*, Routledge, 2013.

<sup>24</sup>Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, 2000.

<sup>25</sup>Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa, *Global Youth: Hybrid Identities and Plural Worlds*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>26</sup>Sumpah Pemuda is a youth conference held in 1928 that gathered youth from various areas of the archipelago to proclaim their unity under one nation of Indonesia.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ben White, "Generation and Social Change: Indonesian Youth in Comparative Perspective", in Kathryn Robinson (ed.), *Youth Identities and Social Transformations in Modern Indonesia*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, 1-22. See also Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity, and the Middle Class*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.



securing a livelihood and achieving social mobility.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, they have become more immersed in developing themselves and cementing their social status in society.

The neoliberal milieu of the post-New Order period arguably has also influenced the Islamic orientation of the current Muslim youth in Indonesia. During the New Order era, for instance, Muslim youth were known for their intellectual activism, which sought relevance between Islam and broader issues, such as inter-faith relations and democracy. Thus, prominent young figures such as Nurcholis Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid came up with some reformed Islamic interpretations which Hefner<sup>30</sup> calls 'civil Islam.' The current Islamic orientation of Muslim youth, however, is more on the implementation of Islam in everyday life which often intermingles with their aspirations for being cool and economically successful.<sup>31</sup> It is manifested in the phenomenon of *hijrah* youth who focus more on self-ethical improvement while at the same time expressing Islam through pop culture.<sup>32</sup> The economic theology of Muslims which sought Allah's economic blessings through sedekah was also popular among Muslim youth who aspired for prosperity.<sup>33</sup> Thus, there has been a shift in Islamic orientation across Indonesian generations which generally reflects the distinction between *pemuda* and *remaja*.

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<sup>29</sup>Suzanne Naafs and Ben White, "Intermediate Generations: Reflections on Indonesian Youth Studies", *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 13, Number 1 (2012), 3-20.

<sup>30</sup>Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>31</sup>Minako Sakai and M. Falikul Isbah, "Limits to Religious Diversity Practice in Indonesia: Case Studies from Religious Philanthropic Institutions and Traditional Islamic Schools", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 42, Number 6 (2014), 722-746.

<sup>32</sup>Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Rise of Cool Ustadz: Preaching, Subcultures, and the Pemuda Hijrah Movement", in Norshahril Saat and Ahmad Najib Burhani (eds.), *The New Santri: Challenges to Traditional Religious Authority in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2020, 239-257.

<sup>33</sup>Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, "Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media", *South East Asia Research*, Volume 28, Number 1 (2020), 70-86.

This assumption, nevertheless, requires a critical note with the rapid development of new media in the last two decades. Despite the assumption of *rebahan* (laying) generation who plays with their smartphones in bed or seek *cuan* (income) from home through the Internet,<sup>34</sup> youths with social media have become the center of revolutions around the globe.<sup>35</sup> The Arab Spring is a case in point that highlights the significance of youth in staging social change in the Middle East. The prominence of new media in the movements suggests that the Internet could be used for media consumption, but at the same time, it also holds the potential as a tool for citizen journalism and even revolution.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Herrera viewed the current youth as the ‘wired generation’ who transformed society through new media.<sup>37</sup> In the case of Indonesia, Merlyna Lim predicted the power of the Internet even in its early stage where on the one hand, the youth used it for fun in Internet cafes, but on the other hand, it played a crucial role in facilitating communication during the ‘98 movement against the authoritarian Suharto.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, despite their apolitical and individualist attitude, the current young generation and new media still hold the potential to bring about change in society.

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<sup>34</sup>Minako Sakai and Bhirawa Anoraga, “Education, Digital Enterprise and Islam in the Indonesian Modern Embedded Economy”, in Shamim Samani and Dora Marinova (eds), *Muslim Women in the Economy: Development, Faith and Globalisation*, London: Routledge, 2020, 214-228.

<sup>35</sup>Linda Herrera and Rehab Sakr, *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East*, New York: Routledge Press, 2014.

<sup>36</sup>Linda Herrera, *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet*, Verso Books, 2014.

<sup>37</sup>Linda Herrera, “Youth and Citizenship in the Digital Age: A View from Egypt”, in Linda Herrera and Rehab Sakr (eds.), *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East*, Routledge, 2014, 19-38.

<sup>38</sup>Merlyna Lim, “From War-Net to Net-War: The Internet and Resistance Identities in Indonesia”, *The International Information & Library Review*, Volume 35, Number 2-4 (2003), 233-248.

## **Muslim philanthropy NGOs and the limits of inter-faith engagement in post-New Order**

Since the end of the New Order period in 1998, inter-faith relations in Indonesia have arguably worsened with the eruption of religious conflict and violence in the public sphere. During this democratizing period, while on one hand, Indonesian citizens have gained wider freedom of expression, yet, the openness of democracy has been exploited by several Islamist groups to promote an exclusionary stance and, to some extent, intolerance towards non-Muslim minorities.<sup>39</sup> Thus, van Bruinessen aptly describes post-New Order Indonesia as a conservative turn given the relatively harmonious inter-faith relations under the New Order era.<sup>40</sup> Under authoritarian rule, the New Order government suppressed Islamist parties and organizations, while the pluralist ‘civil Islam’ promoted by Muslim intellectuals relatively dominated the public sphere.<sup>41</sup>

The limits of inter-faith engagement in post-New Order Indonesia are reflected in the practices of Muslim philanthropy NGOs that are among the most prominent civil society organizations in Indonesia. While Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia has a long history, modern and professional Muslim philanthropy NGOs just emerged in the 1990s.<sup>42</sup> These organizations were established by middle-class Muslims who were concerned about the widening economic gap and competition with other religious organizations.<sup>43</sup> Thus, their vision mainly revolves around

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<sup>39</sup>Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and Alexander R. Arifianto, *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, London: Routledge, 2020. See also Fealy, Greg, and Ronit Ricci, *Contentious Belonging: The Place of Minorities in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019.

<sup>40</sup>Martin van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn”*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013.

<sup>41</sup>Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>42</sup>Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

<sup>43</sup>Hilman Latief, “Islamic Philanthropy and the Private Sector in Indonesia”, *Indonesian*

achieving social justice in Indonesia. These organizations modernized the practices of Islamic philanthropy by professionally managing Islamic alms and charities to create social programs in the areas of education, health, disaster relief, and poverty alleviation.

Notwithstanding their active involvement in providing social services and historical observations on their inter-faith engagement,<sup>44</sup> scholars argue that contemporary Muslim NGOs tend to be sectarian. Several reasons explain their discriminatory tendency. First, their main source of funds is *zakat* where the common interpretation in Indonesia is that the funds should be used strictly for Muslims belonging to the eight groups<sup>45</sup> of recipients.<sup>46</sup> Despite the orthodox interpretation of *zakat*, it is important to note that a significant number of Indonesian Muslims do not have issues with giving their *zakat* to non-Muslims due to the diverse interpretations of *zakat* and Muslims' giving is often driven by their emotions or sympathy for the beneficiaries.<sup>47</sup> However, these *zakat* payers are often not involved in deciding the beneficiaries of *zakat* as this aspect is managed by Muslim NGOs. Second, the broader sentiment of inter-faith tension in Indonesia had prevented Muslim NGOs from becoming inclusive in

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*Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 3, Number 2 (2013), 175-201.

<sup>44</sup>Amelia Fauzia, "Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum: The Charitable Activism of Muhammadiyah During The Colonial Period", *South East Asia Research*, Volume 25, Number 4 (2017), 379-394.

<sup>45</sup>The eight groups of *zakat* recipients include the poor, the needy, *zakat* administrators, those in bondage (slaves), the debt-ridden, those in the cause of God, and the wayfarer.

<sup>46</sup>Minako Sakai and M. Falikul Isbah, "Limits to Religious Diversity Practice in Indonesia: Case Studies from Religious Philanthropic Institutions and Traditional Islamic Schools", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 42, Number 6 (2014), 722-746.

<sup>47</sup>Amelia Fauzia, "Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, Islamization, and Social Justice." *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2017), 223-236; Hilman Latief, "Fatwa Pluralism on Zakat in Indonesia", *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society*, Volume 6, Number 2 (2022), 101-119.

their services.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, through modernization and professionalization, Muslim NGOs have become more aware of the principle of impartiality. For instance, during disasters, they claim that they never ask about the religious background of their beneficiaries. However, this inclusive aid is often limited and not expressed publicly given that Muslim NGOs were often under pressure from some Islamist groups to limit their services to Muslim communities.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the majority of moderate Muslims tended to be less vocal in demanding the practices of inter-faith harmony.<sup>50</sup> Despite these limitations, I argue that there has been a change in the public orientation of Muslim NGOs following youth's engagement through crowdfunding as discussed below.

### **Muslim youth's role in crowdfunding for inter-faith peace**

Muslim youth play roles as platform founders, campaign initiators, and donors in crowdfunding for inter-faith peace. The trend of crowdfunding was popularized by Kitabisa which currently has grown as the largest donation-based crowdfunding platform in the country. Through Kitabisa, anyone can propose any social campaigns and raise funds through the platform and social media. Donors also have more agency to donate to any campaigns that they are interested in.

Kitabisa pays special attention to inter-faith campaigns on its platform. It was founded by several Muslim youths in 2013 while observing growing intolerance and hate speech, particularly on social media. They felt aggrieved and aspired to restore Indonesian unity through mutual help in crowdfunding. For instance, one of the early members of Kitabisa and

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<sup>48</sup>Hilman Latief, "Philanthropy and "Muslim Citizenship" in Post-Suharto Indonesia", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 5, Number 2 (2016), 269-286.

<sup>49</sup>Amelia Fauzia, Sri Hidayati, Endi Aulia Garadian and Bhirawa Anoraga, *Towards Action: Islamic Philanthropy for Social Justice in Indonesia*, Social Trust Fund, 2021.

<sup>50</sup>Zachary Abuza, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia*, London: Routledge, 2006.

its current vice president, Iqbal Hariadi, reflected on this issue on his blog. He wrote:

I was ashamed of myself. I am reminded of the various conflicts that lately have divided us. Different views, then shouting at each other, accusing each other, even hating each other. And continues, who knows for how long. It seems that we are so easily ignited and all differences become reasons for animosity. Although I believe that Islam in Indonesia is like what is said by our friends out there.

I do not close my eyes that there are some Muslims who do not practice Islam as they should, they take actions that make people hate us. But that is not true Islam. Real Islam is a religion of peace. Whose greetings are prayers of kindness for others. Whose holiday brings blessings to all. The one always sharing and loving. When I imagine Islam that is *rahmatan lil alamin* like this, I feel shaken. Ramadan has come. Come on, stop all hate. Expand kindness. And show the true Islam: A big part of Indonesia's diversity that brings peace.<sup>51</sup>

The reflection above was shared by other Kitabisa team members. Therefore, the platform holds a vision of 'connecting good people' who are 'doers, altruists, and tolerance' by supporting inter-faith campaigns on its platform.<sup>52</sup> While not all campaigns are intended to support inter-faith peace,<sup>53</sup> when religious violence erupted, Indonesian citizens used crowdfunding to respond against the radical acts. Some notable campaigns included those that responded to the mosque burning in Papua (2015), the bombing in Thamrin, Jakarta (2016), the vihara burning in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatera (2016), the church bombing in Samarinda, East

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<sup>51</sup>Iqbal Hariadi, "Islam Indonesia Membawa Perdamaian", accessed October 7, 2019, <https://iqbalhariadi.com/2017/05/26/islam-indonesia-membawa-perdamaian/>.

<sup>52</sup>Participatory observation in the Millennials Berkarya's workshop 'Talking Social' by Kitabisa and Semen Indonesia on 18 October 2017.

<sup>53</sup>Medical campaigns make up the biggest portion of donated campaigns in Kitabisa (35%) followed by humanitarian (17%), disaster relief (11%), social activities (10%), and others (27%). See Kitabisa, "Tentang Kitabisa", accessed April 24, 2022, <https://kitabisa.com/about-us>.

Kalimantan (2016), Muslim terrorists' riots in the Depok detention center, West Java (2018), and church bombings in Surabaya, East Java (2018). The initiators of the campaigns were mostly young people or *remaja* in the sense that they were just ordinary youth whose daily activities focused on working, studying, or developing youth culture. Nevertheless, their crowdfunding campaigns were able to mobilize mass support and to some extent have involved Muslim NGOs to participate in inter-faith engagement as discussed in the cases below.

### **Crowdfunding campaign to respond to the Samarinda Church bombing**

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, an Oikumene Church in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, was bombed during mass prayer by a radical Islamist. This incident took its toll on one toddler being killed and three others being injured. Soon, the bombing grabbed media and public attention. Public responses in general were classified into two. Some expressed anger and sympathy toward the victims; others showed dissenting voices that the terrorist act was part of a broader conspiracy theory planned by the opponents of Islam to slander Muslims. Included in the latter response was the message by the late vice-general secretary of the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (MUI), Tengku Zulkarnain. In the press, he questioned the finding of the identity card of the terrorist, "There was something fishy. It was impossible for the bomber to bring his identity card. If someone planned to suicide, he would not show his identity."<sup>54</sup>

This dissenting voice was followed by the relative silence of Indonesian Muslim organizations in responding to the terrorist act. As reported in an article in BBC News titled "Why there are 'no many voices' for Intan

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<sup>54</sup>Republika, "MUI Cium Keganjilan di Aksi Teror Bom Samarinda", accessed January 12, 2020, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/16/11/14/ogmevd396-mui-cium-keganjilan-di-aksi-teror-bom-samarinda>.

and the victims of Samarinda church bombing?” the reporter questioned the silence of Indonesian Muslim organizations such as MUI and FPI in voicing discontent on the bombing.<sup>55</sup> The article contrasted the relative silence of Muslim organizations in comparison to their vocal disagreement in mobilizing mass protests against the Chinese Christian ex-Jakarta governor, Basuki Tjahja Purnama or Ahok.<sup>56</sup>

Amidst the relative silence of Muslim organizations, a youth stepped up to initiate a crowdfunding campaign in Kitabisa to aid the bombing victims on 14 November 2016, a day after the incident. As mentioned in the introduction above, the initiator was Adjie Silarus, an Indonesian Buddhist youth. He did not have a background in humanitarian or inter-faith activism. He was an author of popular books about meditation and yoga, yet, he was saddened by the terrorist act and the way netizens responded to it on social media. He argued that rather than fighting on social media (referring to those who criticized and questioned the credibility of the bombing issue), it was better to unite and take action to help the victims.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, he created a campaign page in Kitabisa to raise funds for the victims of the church bombing. Silarus and Kitabisa team promoted the campaign through social media and targeted to collect \$2,000 initially. Surprisingly, the campaign collected more than \$6,000 within a night. In a week, it had collected \$15,400, or more than 700 percent of the initial target.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>BBC, “Mengapa ‘Tak Banyak Suara’ untuk Intan dan Korban Bom Gereja Samarinda?”, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-37970825>.

<sup>56</sup>On 2 December 2016, some Islamist organizations initiated arguably the biggest mass demonstration in the history of Indonesia to demand the jailing of Ahok who was alleged of doing blasphemy against the Quran. See Lim, Merlyna, “Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and The Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia”, *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2017), 411-427.

<sup>57</sup>Zoom interview with Adjie Silarus, 15 August 2020.

<sup>58</sup>Adjie Santosoputro, “Santunan Publik Bom Gereja Samarinda”, accessed October 14, 2018, <https://kitabisa.com/bomsamarinda>.



This viral crowdfunding campaign represented the shared grievance of Indonesian netizens against the terrorist act as reflected in most of the donors' messages. For instance, a donor named, MHR, donated \$3 and posted a message, "I hope it can help a bit. Don't give up with peace. There are many good people." Another donor named AA donated \$13. His message was "Neutralise radicalism! Let's spread sanity and moderation (of religion)." An anonymous user aspired for the unity of Indonesia. He/she donated \$67 and posted a message, "I hope it can help and lower the burden of our brothers/sisters. Let's pray for the unity of our beloved Indonesia." Another anonymous donor gave \$7 and stated, "I am a Muslim and I will never bomb the Christians or other religions because we are brothers and sisters." The majority of comments condemned the bombing incident and expressed their sympathy and aspiration for inter-faith harmony through their donations.<sup>59</sup>

### **Crowdfunding campaign to respond to the Surabaya Church bombings**

Another example of the use of crowdfunding to counter religious violence is reflected in the campaign to help the victims of the Surabaya church bombings. A series of bombings took place in Surabaya from Sunday to Monday, 13-14 May 2018. This incident was different from the previous terrorist acts in post-New Order Indonesia for two reasons.<sup>60</sup> First, it was a series of bombings that occurred in five places in two days, three of which were churches while the other two were a police station and an apartment. Second, the perpetrators included their families in the suicide bombings. A family of six comprised of the father, the mother with two daughters, and two sons attacked three churches respectively on Sunday. In total, this

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Greg Fealy, "Apocalyptic Thought, Conspiracism and Jihad in Indonesia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 41, Number 1 (2019), 63-85.

series of attacks led to 28 people dying including the suicide bombers. Due to the scale of the bombings, it soon became breaking news and colored the headlines of the media where images, videos, and stories about the bombings went viral.

Following the incident, like the previous case of the Samarinda church bombing, Indonesian citizens turned to crowdfunding to respond to the terrorist act in Surabaya. One of the campaigns was created by a group of YouTubers that consisted of six young men from different religions. They are professional YouTube users who gain income from advertising their YouTube videos. This profession is getting popular among millennials in Indonesia and around the world, which aptly reflects the term *remaja*.<sup>61</sup> With the growing number of users of social media, Instagram and YouTube are not only seen as networking sites for communication or uploading selfies but they have turned into a new source of income for these millennials.

The YouTubers who created a campaign for the Surabaya bombings are mostly known for uploading live gaming, parody, or prank videos on YouTube. For instance, one of them is a Muslim named Usamah Harbatah, who uses the username "HARBATAH." His YouTube channel had 2.3 million subscribers.<sup>62</sup> He was popular due to uploading comedies on his YouTube accounts.

In response to the Surabaya bombings in 2018, Harbatah with other YouTubers created a crowdfunding campaign on Kitabisa to help the victims. The campaign soon reached its donation target of about \$83,100 from 1,281 donors.<sup>63</sup> This campaign page on Kitabisa was also followed by

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<sup>61</sup>Crystal Abidin and Megan Lindsay Brown, *Microcelebrity around The Globe: Approaches to Cultures of Internet Fame*, Emerald Group Publishing, 2018.

<sup>62</sup>Harbatah, "HARBATAH", accessed May 23, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=harbatah](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=harbatah).

<sup>63</sup>SkinnyIndonesian24, "Youtubers Untuk Korban Surabaya #KamiTidakTakut", accessed

a video titled “We Are Not Afraid” on YouTube.<sup>64</sup> Six of the YouTubers expressed their opinions on the terrorist acts in Surabaya.

Harbatah in the video said:

I hope Indonesia can be better in the future...So, I do not care about your religion, your race, and your ethnicity. It is time to help each other. Because the victims are Indonesians, the people of Indonesia.

Another YouTuber named Aulion stated in the video:

To be honest, I have been fed up with the disunity in Indonesia. There are too many hoaxes [on social media] that are worsened by this recent incident (the Surabaya bombings)...I feel that...we should do something, we should help each other. I feel that content creators (YouTubers or microcelebrities) should not only create content, and the viewers, should not only watch (YouTube videos). But we should initiate a movement, let's support each other!

Their comments were shared by the donors' messages which also expressed sympathy for the victims and aspirations for inter-faith harmony and peace in Indonesia.<sup>65</sup> These comments were accompanied by the hashtags #kamitidaktakut (#wearenotafraid) or #suroboyowani (#thebravesurabaya). The hashtag, #wearenotafraid, was often repeatedly used by Internet users around the globe to emphasize that terrorist acts would not frighten them and the community would remain strong.<sup>66</sup>

From the cases above, we can see the role of Muslim youth who collaborate with non-Muslims in countering radical acts through crowdfunding. Their examples also demonstrate that youth's access to new media not only exposed them to the consumerist culture but also social

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February 17, 2020, <https://kitabisa.com/campaign/youtuberspeduli>.

<sup>64</sup>SkinnyIndonesian24, “SkinnyIndonesian24 | Kami Tidak Takut”, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHSO5u9Qfek>.

<sup>66</sup>SkinnyIndonesian24, “Youtubers Untuk Korban Surabaya #KamiTidakTakut”, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://kitabisa.com/campaign/youtuberspeduli>.

issues.<sup>67</sup> In particular, the spread of hoaxes and hate speech, which was then worsened by the terrorist acts, exposed the current youth to inter-faith issues in the country.<sup>68</sup> While Harbatah's YouTube account was full of comedy and prank videos, he was aware of and grieved against the rising religious tension in Indonesia. Therefore, when the Surabaya bombings occurred, he and his YouTuber friends spontaneously initiated the crowdfunding campaign to show solidarity with the bombing victims. The same goes for Silarus and his campaign for the Samarinda church bombing. These immediate responses were enabled by the ease of initiating and spreading crowdfunding campaigns on social media. The donors could also easily donate their money amounting to as low as USD 0.6 by bank transfer or e-money through Kitabisa. Thus, their campaigns were able to go viral and create a sense of horizontal comradeship with the donors who shared the same sentiment against the bombing through the rhetoric of the nation's unity and the hashtag #wearenotafraid.

### **Muslim NGO's role in crowdfunding for inter-faith peace**

Besides Muslim youths, Muslim philanthropy NGOs have also become more involved in countering radical acts and expressing inter-faith solidarity through crowdfunding campaigns. For instance, following the success of the campaign for the victims of the Samarinda church bombing, Kitabisa and Silarus cooperated with ACT to deliver the funds to the victims given that Silarus could not give the donations directly to the church in Samarinda. The funds were used to cover the victims' medical bills and to repair the church building that was destroyed by the bomb. In the case

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<sup>67</sup>Linda Herrera, "Youth and Citizenship in the Digital Age: A View from Egypt", in Linda Herrera and Rehab Sakr (eds), *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East*, London: Routledge, 2014, 19-38.

<sup>68</sup>Bhirawa Anoraga and Minako Sakai, "From Pemuda to Remaja: Millennials Reproducing Civic Nationalism In Post-New Order Indonesia", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Volume 51, Number 150 (2023), 209-230.

of the Surabaya bombings, several national-scale Muslim NGOs including ACT, Dompot Dhuafa, and Rumah Zakat also promoted their aid to the bombing victims on their respective websites. For instance, ACT visited and delivered donations,<sup>69</sup> Dompot Dhuafa offered health services<sup>70</sup> and Rumah Zakat sent its ambulance to the attacked church.<sup>71</sup>

Their involvement in crowdfunding for inter-faith peace is interesting, given that Indonesian Muslim NGOs mainly focus on addressing issues of poverty and disasters. They rarely touched upon inter-faith issues in their programs. Therefore, the more visible involvement of Muslim NGOs in responding to violence against non-Muslims indicates their shift to become more inclusive as opposed to the existing scholarly studies on sectarian Indonesian Muslim philanthropy.<sup>72</sup>

This article draws from the concept of networked social movement to explain Muslim NGOs' engagement in promoting inter-faith harmony in contemporary Indonesia. As elaborated by Castells,<sup>73</sup> networked social movements are characterized by their spontaneous, viral, leaderless, and horizontal tenets, which were present in the cases above. I argue that the success of the crowdfunding campaigns for inter-faith peace has influenced Muslim NGOs to become more open to expressing their involvement in non-Muslim-related campaigns on the Internet, particularly, those that go viral.

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<sup>69</sup>ACT, "Kebaikan Ramadan untuk Keluarga Korban Bom Surabaya", accessed October 9, 2018, <https://news.act.id/berita/kebaikan-ramadan-untuk-keluarga-korban-bom-surabaya>.

<sup>70</sup>Dompot Dhuafa, "Dompot Dhuafa Bersikap untuk Kasus Bom di Surabaya", accessed October 9, 2018, <https://www.dompetdhuafa.org/post/detail/8574/dompot-dhuafa-bersikap-untuk-kasus-bom-di-surabaya>.

<sup>71</sup>Rumah Zakat, "Ambulance Rumah Zakat Turut Mengevakuasi Korban Ledakan Bom Surabaya", accessed October 9, 2019, <https://www.rumahzakat.org/en/ambulance-rumah-zakat-turut-mengevakuasi-korban-ledakan-bom-surabaya/>.

<sup>72</sup>See, for instance, Minako Sakai and M. Falikul Isbah, "Limits to Religious Diversity Practice in Indonesia: Case Studies from Religious Philanthropic Institutions and Traditional Islamic Schools", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 42, Number 6 (2014), 722-746.

<sup>73</sup>Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

In the case of ACT, for instance, whenever viral issues happened, the organization would launch crowdfunding campaigns instantly, even though the issues did not necessarily concern Muslims.<sup>74</sup> The Muslim NGOs whom I interviewed<sup>75</sup> have seen crowdfunding as an alternative potential income besides *zakat* given the trend of online donations in Indonesia has increased over the years.<sup>76</sup> For Kitabisa, the platform received benefits from Muslim NGOs given the latter's wide coverage of volunteers. Thus, these organizations often help Kitabisa verify and deliver public donations to beneficiaries, regardless of whether the beneficiaries were Muslim or non-Muslim as in the case of the Samarinda church bombing.

Theologically, beneficiaries of donations from crowdfunding are also more flexible than *zakat*, thus, the former could be used to aid non-Muslims. This study agrees with Marie Juul Petersen's<sup>77</sup> findings that Muslim NGOs' inclusivity is closely related to the sources of their income. Hence, in this regard, the crowdfunding trend has provided financial

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<sup>74</sup>For instance, amidst the circulated news on the Australian bushfire in early 2020, ACT conducted fundraising to address the issue despite the beneficiaries being non-Muslims. See Indonesia Dermawan, "Ayo Atasi Dampak Kebakaran Hutan Australia", accessed September 24, 2020, <https://www.indonesiadermawan.id/campaign/145/ayo-atasi-dampak-kebakaran-hutan-australia>. ACT also often raised funds for various natural disasters in Indonesia even though the beneficiaries were non-Muslims. See, for instance, ACT, "Selamatkan Anak-Anak Suku Asmat Dari Gizi Buruk", accessed February 17, 2020, <https://kitabisa.com/campaign/gizianakasmal>.

<sup>75</sup>Interviews with the representatives of Dompot Dhuafa, ACT, LazisMu, and Rumah Zakat in Jakarta and Bandung, 2017.

<sup>76</sup>Following the pandemic in 2020, online donations in Indonesia grew to about 72% while *zakat maal* (income-based *zakat*) which often makes up the biggest portion of Muslim NGOs' income has stagnated or even declined. See Gopay and Kopernik, *Gopay Digital Donation Outlook 2020*, 2020; BAZNAS, *Outlook Zakat Indonesia 2021*, 2021. See also scholarly works on online philanthropy in Indonesia such as Hilman Latief and Syamsul Anwar, "Technologizing Islamic Philanthropy During The Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia", *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society*, Volume 6, Number 2 (2022), 120-141. See also Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, "Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media", *South East Asia Research*, Volume 28, Number 1 (2020), 70-86.

<sup>77</sup>Marie Juul Petersen, *For Humanity or For The Umma?: Aid and Islam in Transnational Muslim NGOs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

incentives for Muslim NGOs to broaden their programs and target beneficiaries, which has expanded their inclusivity as well.

Have these Muslim NGOs been fully inclusive and renounced their sectarian tendency? I argue that they are still ambiguous in being impartial. Based on my interviews, on one hand, these professional NGOs stressed that they are inclusive in their aid without questioning the religious background of their beneficiaries, for instance, during disaster relief. On the other hand, some of these organizations, like ACT, for instance, their campaigns were dominated by *umma* programs with crowdfunding for fellow Muslims in Indonesia and around the globe such as Afghanistan, Palestine, Uyghur, and Rohingya.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, the campaigns themselves were not translated into sustainable social movements, after they succeeded in collecting and delivering donations. They were just ‘many clicks but little sticks.’<sup>79</sup> I argue that this temporality is due to their leaderless nature and the background of the initiators as ordinary youth whose daily activities revolved around working. Silarus, for instance, even though he initiated two crowdfunding campaigns related to restoring inter-faith harmony,<sup>80</sup> he is not a full-time activist for peace. As I mentioned above, he is just a book author on mental health. Therefore, he did not consider translating the campaigns into a sustainable organized movement, and the campaigns immediately ended after the donations were delivered to the beneficiaries.<sup>81</sup>

While the campaigns were temporary, the accumulation of repeated

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<sup>78</sup>ACT, “Aksi Cepat Tanggap”, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://kitabisa.com/orang-baik/aaea4216c2953531ae19cb4e4b81d5bb>.

<sup>79</sup>Merlyna Lim, “Many Clicks but Little Sticks: Social Media Activism in Indonesia”, in Nishant Shah, Puthiya Purayil Sneha, and Sumandro Chattapadhyay (eds.), *Digital Activism in Asia Reader*, Meson Press, 2013, 127-154.

<sup>80</sup>In 2016, Silarus initiated two crowdfunding campaigns to respond to the vihara burning in North Sumatra and the church bombing in Samarinda.

<sup>81</sup>Zoom interview with Adjie Silarus, 15 August 2020.

crowdfunding campaigns to counter radical acts in Indonesia has mainstreamed the public expression of inter-faith solidarity. Publicly promoting inter-faith peace in Indonesia ran the risk of receiving offline or online attacks from some Islamist groups.<sup>82</sup> However, crowdfunding for peace has been repeatedly initiated and supported by a significant number of donors. This strength of big numbers<sup>83</sup> (and its financial potential) has inspired the engagement of Muslim NGOs in assisting non-Muslim victims as shown by ACT, Dompét Dhuafa, and other Muslim NGOs above.

For instance, beyond the campaigns to respond to inter-faith violence, during the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Kitabisa initiated a campaign called 'Unite against COVID-19' that had more than 4,000 individuals and organizations participating in fundraising against the pandemic. ACT was one of the organizations that participated in Kitabisa's campaign. Interestingly, one of ACT's social media posts on this campaign portrays religious diversity practices, where its volunteers undertook sanitization of a non-Muslim house of worship (specifically, a Hindu temple). The post states:

The more days passed, the more our people tried to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of them was the Inter-Faith Youth Community Peace Leader, in Indonesia. This community was in collaboration with ACT Jember (a city in East Java), undertaking sanitizations of several houses of worship that have become one of the sources of the spread of coronavirus. With this collaboration, it was expected that the outreach of sanitations would be broadened to other houses of worship. This collaboration, insyaAllah (God's willing), would be a good step towards facing the COVID-19 pandemic collectively. ACT Jember, as a humanitarian organization, is completely open to various

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<sup>82</sup>For instance, in 2008, FPI, an Islamist vigilante group attacked the national alliance for religious freedom for expressing their aspiration in Monas, Jakarta.

<sup>83</sup>See Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.



elements of society to address this problem. This collaboration was the manifestation that this humanitarian task does not discriminate against religious backgrounds, ethnicities, or cultures. If it is about the life of the nation, we should do it collectively. *Insyallah* (God willing), by being united and doing goodness, we can [do it].<sup>84</sup>

For ACT, the post above was a striking contrast from its usual posts about the global Muslim umma. Therefore, despite its *ad hoc* and sporadic expressions, this post represents an important form of development for a Muslim NGO to gradually mainstream inter-faith engagement following the support of Muslim youths through crowdfunding in Indonesia.

## Conclusion

This study has discussed the engagement of the current youth and Muslim NGOs in promoting inter-faith harmony through crowdfunding in Indonesia. I argue that despite their identification as *remaja* or consumerist youth, their media savviness has also exposed them to inter-faith issues that they attempted to counter through crowdfunding. This study approaches crowdfunding campaigns as networked social movements where the campaigns were based on spontaneous responses and were temporal in nature. Nevertheless, their impacts were reflected in the significant donation collection and the more visible involvement of Muslim NGOs in inter-faith campaigns. I further contend that Muslim NGOs' involvement was incentivized by their attempt to seek alternative funding besides *zakat* and they saw crowdfunding as a solution to their financial stagnation. Thus, they have begun broadening their public campaigns to cover wide-ranging viral issues in Indonesia and overseas including inter-faith problems.

These findings contribute to studies on Indonesian youth, Islamic philanthropy, and inter-faith relations in Indonesia. This study has

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<sup>84</sup>ACT, "Aksi Cepat Tanggap", accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/AksiCepatTanggap/>.

complicated the assumption of socially apathetic *remaja*<sup>85</sup> and questioned the alleged sectarian orientation of Muslim philanthropy NGOs.<sup>86</sup> These findings also shed light on the state of Islam and inter-faith relations, which have become more dynamic following the development of new media in contemporary Indonesia. While sectarianism prevails, ordinary youth, who were deemed to be passive, have become more vocal in expressing their outrage and hope for inter-faith harmony through crowdfunding. Their involvement has inspired dynamism in inter-faith relations and challenged the argued conservative turn in post-New Order Indonesia.

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<sup>85</sup>See, for instance, Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, "From Pemuda to Remaja", *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*, Routledge, 2013.

<sup>86</sup>See, for instance, Minako Sakai and M. Falikul Isbah, "Limits to Religious Diversity Practice in Indonesia: Case Studies from Religious Philanthropic Institutions and Traditional Islamic Schools", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 42, Number 6 (2014), 722-746. See also Hilman Latief, "Philanthropy and "Muslim Citizenship" in Post-Suharto Indonesia", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 5, Number 2 (2016), 269-286.

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