



International Conference  
On Disability &  
Disability in Asia

# 2019 AIDRAN Conference Report



## AIDRAN Biennial Conference

The 2nd International Conference on Disability and Diversity in Asia organised jointly by the Law Faculty of Brawijaya University, La Trobe Law School, AIDRAN, and Pusat Studi Layanan Disabilitas (PSLD) is held in Malang, 24-25 September 2019.

This year conference theme is Theorising Advocacy and Research for Disability Policy and Social Inclusion: Experiences from Asia.

It is estimated that about 60 percent of the worlds' 650 million persons with disabilities live in Asia and the Pacific. Around 30 countries in Asia have ratified the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Countries who have ratified the convention are obliged to adopt domestic laws that are not discriminatory, and protect the rights of people with disabilities to a life of respect, freedom, independence, and equality. Asia is a region rich with diverse populations, where history, politics, religion and the legal landscape provide unique experiences and practices of diversity and disability inclusion. Asia's colonial past informs the development of its socio-political and legal practices, which in turn influence efforts towards social inclusion.

This landscape we believe forms a key consideration for policy research on disability advocacy, with scholarship on the socio-legal and cultural understanding of local practices being an important factor shaping the emergence of disability advocacy and disability studies.

With growing interest in policy reform to eliminate barriers for disability inclusion in the Asian context, this conference offers an opportunity for scholars, advocates and policy specialists to share their research, knowledge, and experience working on various discipline that enhance disability inclusion at both the policy and social level. The discussion at the conference will provide an opportunity to reveal the unique experiences of communities, government and development specialists in Asia in the processes that engage, promote and enact practices of inclusion.

This initiative is sponsored by the Faculty of Law at Brawijaya University, La Trobe Law School, and the Knowledge Sector Initiative. International partnership between Australian and Indonesian universities and organisations are the key highlights from this conference. The conference received the support from Knowledge Sector Initiative KSI.

## 1. Conference preparation

### a. Distribution of the Call for Papers, Abstracts and papers received, and our conference social media strategy

#### *i. Collating a contact list*

In January 2019, we compiled a contact list of Australian and Indonesian disability advocates, researchers, policy workers, academics and students to send out a Call for Papers. Communication team at La Trobe University and Brawijaya University were able to collate a list capturing a wide range of contacts in Australia and Indonesia with varying levels of influence and seniority, who might be interested to contribute or attend our event.

#### *ii. Call for papers response rate and inviting speakers*

After distributing the call for papers, we received 214 abstracts. The conveners, Dr Afrianty and Slamet Thohari MA read and review the abstracts with the help of research assistant Dr Monika Winarnita. The abstracts are of high quality which made it a difficult job for us to make decision. We have to categorise the abstracts into the list of themes covered by the conference. We decided to accept 64 abstracts. These abstracts are mostly sent by academics based at Indonesian universities from different provinces in Indonesia. The high number of abstracts we received indicates that our announcement in the social media and through our network worked effectively.

We received twelve abstracts from international speakers including from Australia, China, India, Bangladesh, Iraq, the United States, and Sweden. At the last minute, two presenters were unable to attend due to personal reasons. These speakers are based at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Syracuse University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, American Iraq University, Monash University, Queensland University of Technology, University of New South Wales, University of Massachusetts-Boston. We also received abstract submission from a company based in China who has been part of ILO leading partner, Flex Zhuhai who has been promoting inclusion for people with disabilities. They have 500 people with various disabilities employed. Unfortunately, only a week before our conference they could not make it to attend the conference.

Apart from the abstract submitted at the conference we also received interests from local DPOs and DFAT funded program partners to organise their own panel. Three special panels were organised by Program Peduli, The Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice, Groups of Women's disability advocates coordinated by Women and Children Disability Advocacy Organisation or SAPDA based in Yogyakarta, and a panel organised by Cucu Saidah, the founder of Jakarta Barrier Free Tourism. Cucu Saidah organised a panel on disaster risk management. SAPDA organised a panel on Gender, sexuality and disabilities. There are individual researchers from DFAT funded partners who also asked to be given the opportunity to share their work. They include KIAT and Inovasi.

Considering this overwhelming response rate greatly illustrated the demand for an event like AIDRAN's conference on Diversity and disability, and showed that there was a demand and a keen audience to speak and participate at and in an event like AIDRAN's conference.

Following the conference we have kept all abstracts and papers received on file, to gain an insight in what research and advocacy issues our target audience is interested in. We have mentioned from our conference announcement that we will organise publications for the conference papers. We are currently working on identifying research papers to be included in the publication. The publication will take two forms – six papers to be included in a special journal edition and a book volume. Professor Patrick Keyzer will support AIDRAN for the publication of these research papers.

We're hoping to use these insights to tailor future AIDRAN events and initiatives to our audience further, and are keen to use this data to help us improve our research database.

### *iii. Social media strategy*

As part of our conference preparations, we drew up a live-tweeting strategy for before, during and after the conference. For this, Lise Leitner and Dina Afrianty compiled a list of all relevant Twitter handles for speakers and attendees. We notified all Australian speakers of our tweeting strategy and asked them to retweet and like content wherever they felt it was appropriate.

*iv. Call for participations*

In March 2019 we started to announce the call for participation for audience who want to attend and observe the conference through Eventbrite. We first sold 100 tickets which were sold out within a month. We then sold another 150 tickets. Due to the capacity of the rooms and also the logistics we have to stop selling the tickets. In total we have 250 participants registered through Eventbrite.

We have received interests from Government institution. The Ministry of Human Rights and Justice sent twelve researchers to attend the conference.

**b. Speakers and themes**

For the September conference, we organised one keynote session, three plenary sessions, and over ten parallel sessions. In total, AIDRAN hosted about 100 speakers (some papers have more than one authors). Through these different sessions, the AIDRAN organisational team took care to present a varied programme of themes and topics, gender, and disability, catering to as many audience members' needs as possible.

Speakers included a wide range of people with lived experiences and different professions in the disability activism and research landscape. The response to our selection was incredibly positive; with both the bigger and smaller session rooms being consistently full, our attendance rates illustrates a high demand for events that facilitate discussion while also being accessible to everyone in the audience.

*i. Relationships with speakers and their home institutions*

As part of inviting such a broad range of speakers, AIDRAN strived to establish and strengthen many of its relationships with new and known institutions. Through inviting a range of speakers, both from Indonesia and Australia as well as from the broader international world, AIDRAN was able to form connections for potential future partnerships for AIDRAN itself, and expose its audience to an international selection of disability experts.

*ii. Invited speakers*

We invited speakers from Australia and Indonesia. The selection of these speakers is based on their research expertise, their lived

experiences and their work on advocating inclusion. We ensure that selection are based on gender and their lived experiences.

### Invited speakers

#### From Australia

Professor Patrick Keyzer,  
*La Trobe University*

Associate Professor Karen Soldatic,  
*Western Sydney University*

Kelley Johnson,  
*Deakin University*

Dr Darren O'Donovan,  
*La Trobe University*

Dr Piers Gooding,  
*Melbourne University*

Professor Hans Pols,  
*University of Sydney*

Nihal Iscel,  
*Western Australia*

#### From Indonesia

Dr Antoni Saputra,  
*District Mayor Office of Padang, West Sumatra  
and University of Padang*

Dr Arina Hayati,  
*Institute Technology Surabaya*

Dr Ani Suryani,  
*Universitas Sebelas Maret*

Abi Muratama, MA,  
*Ministry of Law and Human Rights*

#### Government of Indonesia

Ibu Vivi Yulaswati,  
*Ministry of National Development and Planning,  
Bappenas*

Professor Dr Ocky Kartaradjasa,  
*Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher  
Education*

By inviting these speakers AIDRAN has established as well as improved its network with their speaker's institutions. It was an

opportunity for invited speakers to engage and develop conversation and knowledge sharing. They also use the opportunity to see the works of AIDRAN and allow them to think of potential network they can pursue with other AIDRAN members.

Speeches by two Indonesian high ranking officials are especially important as it provides a direct and up to date information on policy development in regards to Indonesian government commitment to a policy of inclusion.

Presentation by Australian speakers provided opportunity for Indonesian audience to learn about the progress and challenges for policy inclusion, as well as research development in Australia's academic setting.

We believe that partnership and collaboration between Australian and Indonesian researchers and advocates grow organically as they have started that journey from their meeting in Malang.

## 2. Conference

### *i. Support from Knowledge Sector Initiative and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

The conference can be convened with the support that AIDRAN receives from Knowledge Sector Initiative. Organising an academic international conference is challenging especially in a field where support and research environment in Indonesia is still relatively limited.

In his remark, Mr Aedan Whyatt expressed that the Australian Government is committed to support Indonesian government to introduce and implement a policy of inclusion as part of Indonesia's broader commitment to social inclusion. As Indonesia's closest neighbour, Australia believes that a good policy is the result of knowledge and experiences sharing that put the lived experiences at the center of policy making.

Similarly, Ms Jana Hertz from Knowledge Sector Initiative believed that through this kind of activity, policy makers,

researchers and advocates can work together and learn to create a good policy for inclusion.

La Trobe University through La Trobe Law School demonstrates its commitment for broader social inclusion in Indonesia.



*ii. Collaboration with Brawijaya University*

The success of the conference was due to the commitment and support from Brawijaya University Law School. Their commitment is demonstrated from its work to renovate accessibility in their faculty building. They pay for the catering and others logistics including arranging a visit to the Batu District Office at the closing of the conference. This conference is important for Brawijaya Law School as it helps them expands their international partnership in research with Australian institution. It also helps boost their faculty members interest in exploring research ideas and research partnership with international researchers.

*iii. Sustainability*

Conversation and discussion to continue the international research collaboration has already underway. Under the existing MOU between Brawijaya and La Trobe University, there has been already expression of interests from the Law Faculty to continue its support in organising AIDRAN Biennial Conference. Other than that AIDRAN has also received interests from other universities to host the 2021 AIDRAN Biennial Conference, that is Airlangga University in Surabaya and Universitas Negeri

Padang and Universitas Andalas (both in West Sumatra) to host the conference.

*iv. Academic and research strength*

Indonesian universities are under pressure to increase their international profile through building research partnership with international institutions. It is therefore in their interests to push for collaboration initiated by AIDRAN and La Trobe University.

*v. Venue and conference accessibility*

It is our intention that through organising academic conference we would also be able to inform and influence transformation within higher education institution. The organising of the conference inside the University campus is to enable us to demonstrate inclusion at a very practical level. Changing social attitudes even among officials at universities as well as within students communities will start from directly engaging the communities. To achieve this objective we invited students to volunteers at the conference. These volunteers are expected to provide care and to accompanied participants who need support for mobility. PSLD organised recruitment for the volunteers and provide training for these new volunteers. They learn how to provide support for different type of disabilities.



*a. Student volunteers*

The number of student volunteers who helped with the mobility were 24. As volunteers they received certificate of appreciation at the completion of the conference.



We also recruited eight sign language interpreters. They are recruited from PSLD students volunteers.

PSLD and Law Faculty also provided eight language interpreter who help translate English to Indonesia and Indonesia to English.

English presentations are being translated by student English translator into Bahasa Indonesia by typing it into the big screen. For blind participants, volunteers are reading the screen. Deaf participants will have sign language interpreter helping them understand what is being discussed.

With four panels distributed in four different rooms the committee have to ensure that each room are accessible for all different type of disabilities.

b. Batu event

The Law Faculty and PSLD organised a hearing with the District Office of Batu and invited their participation at the conference. The Mayor positively welcome our invitation and agreed to host all conference speakers to a closing dinner at their office in Batu.

The Mayor of Batu expected that her office can learn more about inclusion and therefore saw this as an opportunity to gather the knowledge from scholars and advocates from Australia and Indonesia.

As a major Tourism destination, the Mayor Office specifically asked us to help them enhancing their knowledge to provide accessibility in their city.

*vi. Conference survey: gaging our audience's interests and knowing the make-up of our conference's audience*

On the last day of our conference, we urged all audience participants to fill out a simple conference survey. We put this survey together to learn more about:

- Any accessibility issues attendees might have encountered
- Whether we could improve anything further to make our events more accessible
- What sessions our audience enjoyed most and
- Whether they had any feedback for us to do things differently in the future.

Through the survey results, we learned that many attendees thoroughly enjoyed the event, were impressed with the accessibility arrangements, and were hoping to attend the 2021 conference.

*vii. Social analytics*

Lise Leitner live-tweeted during both conference days from the La Trobe Law and AIDRAN account. We also alerted the La Trobe main University Twitter to the fact that our conference was taking place, and they promoted our content regularly leading up to, and during the conference by retweeting it to more than 30K followers. Thanks to this multi-pronged Twitter strategy the AIDRAN account had the highest engagement numbers since it was created. This undoubtedly helped AIDRAN gain meaningful exposure among the La Trobe Community as well as the broader Australian audience. We received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback, both from Australian and Indonesian attendees, and we hope to build on this engagement in the future.

### 3. Event aftermath: Positive outcomes

- a. New AIDRAN members
- b. Collaborations
- c. Positive feedback
  - i. **Feedback on accessibility**

Through direct emails and our survey data, AIDRAN obtained a wide range of positive feedback on the event's accessibility arrangements. Based on this feedback AIDRAN is hoping to set a positive example to the wider Indonesian research community in terms of how to make events accessible, and design a set of accessibility guidelines for organisations and universities to use in the future.

**ii. Speaker feedback**

Our speakers both from Australia and Indonesia expressed their overwhelming and positive remarks about their experience in sharing their knowledge and experience and the opportunity to meet and make new connections with Indonesian scholars and advocates. They are impressed with the accessibility, they experience no language barriers and no mobility barriers. Overseas speakers were especially impressed by the fact that so many people with lived experience attended the conference and become speakers at the conference. Nihal Iscel, a long time disability advocate who have travelled to many countries for disability inclusion event said that it is the first event in her many years of advocacy where she gets to meet with so many people with lived experiences and that so many papers are presented by persons with disabilities. A similar comment was given by our speaker from American University in Iraq. She attended my academic conference on disability but never she saw that many speakers and attendance are people with lived experiences.

## 4. Key takeaways

Our key takeaways are:

- a. There is a demand for events like the AIDRAN conference;
- b. There is an appetite for international collaboration in the Indonesian disability research and advocacy sector;
- c. By organising and accessible event and setting an example, official institutions were keen to follow suit.