

## Background

The catastrophic event of Tsunami that took place in Aceh on 26 December 2004, was one of the turning point of the main functions of media in Indonesia. At that time, mass media in Indonesia was not only the reporters of disasters, but it became institutions that collect and distribute relief funds and donations from public. Almost every citizen in Indonesia received continuous sympathetic reporting on the conditions of tsunami victims and the following earthquake that happened in Nias. This condition touched hearts of many people to provide donations to the victims. Metro TV was one of the media that took advantage of the situation by reporting that Metro TV collect relief funds and donations from public through the “*Indonesia Menangis*” (Indonesia is crying) program. It was estimated that within a week, Metro TV collected approximately Rp. 40 Billion (Bintang, 2010).

The success of Metro TV as a fund rising engine was followed by other media, including TV One. During Mountain Merapi volcanic eruption in Jogja (2010), TV One collected donations in an approximate amount of Rp. 50 billion through the “*Satu Untuk Negeri*” (one for the nation) program, just within three weeks. Prior to that, during the earthquake disaster in Padang (2009), TV One also collected donations in the approximate amount of Rp. 20 million. All of these donations pour into the company’s bank account, not separated. So, how about the accountability on the use of those public funds? There has never been any clarity or transparency of any data related to this. Whereas, the moral consequences of those accountability reports are with the donation’s funds managers, at least it has to be audited by an independent public accountant, and the results must be published through printed national media. Considering that the donation funds were collected by various members of public from different parts of Indonesia.

The problem that arised when mass media also became collectors of public’s donation funds, is how about media’s independency? How about media’s transparency when themselves are also involved as philanthropy institutions? And how about accountability and good governance that is being implemented by the media?

## The ‘Helping Attitude’ Culture in Indonesia

The term philanthropy itself can be defined as ***voluntary action (giving and serving) for the public good*** (Payton and Moody, 2008). This condition applies in various parts of the world. Groups who have more wealth and fortune will provide support to other people in need who are less fortunate. Although in some cases, material goods, is not the only thing that is recorded as philanthropic activities, donation in forms of energy and thoughts from other people is also recorded as part of the philanthropy project.

Unlike charity, philanthropy relies more on advocacy and empowerment with long term impact. Charity itself relies on the service aspect (Latief, 2012). This later developed in the modern world. Providing support and compensation for long term commitment, particularly for the education and health sectors became priority for most philanthropic institutions nowadays. But as a matter of fact, the long history of philanthropic activities that cannot be separated from the history of charity, became a tradition in various nations and customs, and people from all around the world. Including Indonesia.

The Indonesian people itself are used to the ‘helping each other’ culture that is called “*gotong royong*” (meaning: mutual cooperation). Where people are giving and receiving something from one another, where they will later on return the favor. “What goes around comes around” is a picture on how Indonesian thinks about its community. This situations commonly happen in some areas when it comes to building new houses, helping in funeral process, helping in wedding ceremonies, giving presents, and etc. (Forshee, 2006). This later become habitual and daily practices that is done by individuals or through institutions. In urban areas of Indonesia, there is also the *Paketan* (potluck) culture, which is a tradition during family gatherings of neighbors or family members, where they do not collect cash, but they bring processed food or kettle that they will later on enjoy together (Midgley, 2011).

Various community organizations in Indonesia are also doing these philanthropic activities, both in faith based organizations and in non-faith based organizations. This condition is also reflected in companies established in Indonesia. Prior to the legitimation of the Corporate Social Responsibility bill No. 40 in 2007 by the Government that order companies to take responsibility of their social environment, the average companies in Indonesia have carried out philanthropic programs.

This does not occur naturally for the mass media companies in Indonesia. There is no doubt that the mass media in Indonesia has done spontaneous philanthropic activities particularly when it relates to natural disasters. Their efforts is to provide open and voluntary relief, but they often failed to realise that it could affect the independency of media. This is a situation that rarely happen for mass media that circulate in other countries. It is recorded that mass media such as Aljazeera, CNN, Reuters and others, reports on natural disaster quiet intensely, but they never turned into fundrising institutions. Those media only provide information to public on where they can place their donation for relief, primarily through institutions that are already providing relief assistance when disasters happen.

### **Media must be Independent**

The mass media cannot be seperated from the newsreporters aspects which are informative, truthful, accurate, objective, and has a balance compositions or proportional. From this angle it is clear that media are required to have an independent attitude. From the public’s wish that media must be independent, objective, and impartial; the situation where media became fund rising agencies is often questionable. According to Matheson, one of the function of the media to remain independent is its watchdog function. That is to supervise and to run investigatory reports to oversee government’s and law enforcements’ responsibility as the key pillarts to a nation (Allan, 2010).

Logically, the function of media as a “watcdog” can also be highlighted. So far, media are in favor to public when it comes to events that provides disaster relief. The media also has the ability to criticise, how much money is being raised, and how, when, and where it has been distributed. For example, when the Tsunami occured in Aceh (2004), hundreds of organizations, both from Indonesia and outside Indonesia deployed their forces to Aceh. The amount of donations they collected was more than US\$ 493 million, and media in Indonesia was very dilligent when it comes to monitoring of those funds.

At that time, almost everyday, media in Indonesia reports on the misuse of those funds. For example, there are organizations working in health sectors who provide assistance in housing infrastructures instead of providing assistance in accordance to their health expertise, then, there is an international orgainzation working in the field of child welfare that forced themselves to construct school buildings, and so forth; and these were critically highlighted by media. Because in practice, those organizations failed to perform in a professional and propotional manners when providing relief assistance. But, how about

control of funds collected by the media themselves? Who is monitoring them? Especially at that time, there are a lot of media that also turned into relief fund managers. If the presence of media that turned into a fund raising machine was not considered as a problem, then it is very critical to define a clear rules for the media.

Meanwhile, observing situations in the United States, it is clear that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), is responsible to issue regulations and articles that relates to programs that are not eligible to be displayed, one of them is when dealing with fund raising efforts (or obvious solicitation of funds) (Medoff, 2011). A rule that provides clear boundaries to maintain media's independence.

### **Transparent and Non CSR**

The typical characteristics of the Indonesian people with the spirit of *gotong-royong* inevitably influence the mass media in Indonesia. Condition where media is influenced by the public is very likely to occur, therefore the function of social media becomes the reflection of the society (Straubhaar, 2012). Especially when there is a claim that the media, particularly television in Indonesia, is an activator of the most massive philanthropic disaster over the past 15 years (Idhom, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of security by all parties, including media themselves, to ensure that their corridors of acts are in accordance to public's desire.

All philanthropic organizations should be supervised and transparent, all Social Foundations must be open to the public. Including the media. Media can no longer act solely based on guardians of public interest role, with the existence of monitoring function in other parties, they also have to take brave actions, that is to self-criticize themselves. Media must be vigilant not to get caught in seeing shortcomings and mistakes of other media, regardless of their own, "able to see ants across the ocean, and failed to see elephants in front of our own eyes".

The existence of a mass media code of ethics that was produced by the Indonesian Press Council was an effort to ensure that media who act as fundraisers, must be transparent. A compromising steps to allow media to collect public funds for social activities is no longer feasible. Especially in ensuring that those funds will reach the rights beneficiaries. To separate company bank accounts with public donation bank account (Article 2) is the right initial step. Also when providing the donation, it is critical to mention that the donation is from the public, not from the media company.

This must be firmly assured because it is very inappropriate to use public funds for company's CSR Corporate Social Responsibility. It was done by ANTV *Peduli Untuk Negeri* (care for nation), where in their 2011 annual report stated that the public donation became ANTV CSR fund. The same thing happened to Femina Group that placed YDBA *Sekar Melati* as part of their CSR program, where the fund is collected from public. In fact, the concept of CSR is to allocate company's profit for social activities within the community. On the other hand, Metro TV that has established Yayasan Sukma to manage the donation funds from the *Indonesia Menangis* program is still in the grey area, where they already have an independent organization, a website to report on the use of funds, but the member of the management team is not transparently published.

### **The Use of Media's Name**

The main concern of many parties is when the media turned into the philanthropic institutions is the use of their own name when they provide assistance to community. For example, *Pundi Amal* SCTV, *Indosiar Peduli*, *TVOne Satu untuk Negeri*, *ANTV Peduli Untuk Negeri*, *Dompot Kemanusiaan Indonesia Menangis* Metro TV, and others, shows the close relation between the media's name and the philanthropic activities, and what is often forgotten is that the fund is from the media, whilst in fact, the real contributor is the public, not the media.

It also shows that the use of the media's name has become the major requirements of the media in becoming a fund rising institution. Not merely for humanitarian reasons because, again, there is interest to "emphasize" the name of the media in these activities. This situation seems to be inevitable for any media company that turned into public fund rising institution.

If this situation is already occurred, then what needs to be further assessed is whether the media actually remember to describe the source of the donation (which is public) when they handover the donation to beneficiaries. The awareness must come from the media itself. Although they often claim the airtime they used as a media to collect those funds, therefore it can be claimed as the donation by the media itself (the value can be calculated), and the generosity of the media supposed to appear during this process.

### **Accountability of Media**

Accountability is often associated with a variety of terms and phrases such as openness, transparency, accessibility, and reconnecting with the public. From this concept, media is required to have the ability to be opened, transparent, accessible to anyone, and is inseparably connected with the public's interests. Then in general, media accountability relates to how the media is held accountable to the public.

If the media has turned into a philanthropic institutions, then the media must be able to be held accountable to the public. Like a saying, mass media that turn into fund collectors and relief service providers, they have gone beyond their line of authority as a guard/watchdog for public interest, then it is inevitable that they need to build consciousness that they must be held accountable by displaying their philanthropic function openly to the public.

Later on some media indeed separated their *ad hoc* function as a relief fund collectors by turning into a Foundation. For example, the *Republika* newspaper that formed a fundraising committee in 1993 and established a separate Foundation, which is the *Yayasan Dompot Dhuafa* complete with its own website to report financial use as a very simple form of being accountable. On the other hand, *Kompas* that started fund rising during the eruption of *Mountain Galunggung* in 1982, only established *Yayasan Dana Kemanusiaan Kompas* in 2010, and only in 2013 they own an independent website for transparency of relief funds.

### **Conclusion**

The typical characteristics of the Indonesian people in *gotong royong* that is reflected in its mass media, has its own uniqueness. So, when permission is granted for media to turn into philanthropic institutions can no longer be avoided anymore. However, it needs to have clear and firm rules to regulations to regulate these things.

From these general situations and conditions of the media in Indonesia, in the end the public wish for; after the release of *Media Philanthropy Code of Ethics* in the beginning of

2013; that the media will need to have more serious commitment on their public accountability, especially when they already turned into a community fund raising institutions.

**Reference:**

Allan, Stuart. 2010. *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*. New York: Routledge.

Bintang, Samiaji. 2011. <http://www.remotivi.or.id/pendapat/metro-tv-effect>

Forshee, Jill. 2006. *Culture and customs of Indonesia*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Hendricks, John Allen. 2010. *The Twenty-first-Century Media Industry : Economic and Managerial Implications In The Age of New Media*. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Idhom, Addi Mawahibun. 2013. <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/02/06/173459597/>  
Transparansi-Filantropi-Media-Massa-Dipertanyakan

Latief, Hilman. 2012. *Islamic Charities and Social Activism: Welfare, Dakwah and Politics in Indonesia*. Dissertation, Utrecht University.

Matheson, Donald. 2010. *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism* edited by Stuart Allan. Oxon: Routledge.

Medoff, Norman. 2011. *Electronic Media : Then, Now, and Later*. Oxford: Elseveir Inc.

Midgley, James and Mitsuhiro Hosaka. 2011. *Grassroots Social Security in Asia : Mutual Aid, Microinsurance and Social Welfare* .Canada: Routledge.

Payton, Robert L., Michael P. Moody. 2008. *Understanding Philanthropy : Its Meaning And Mission*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Straubhaar, Joseph. Robert LaRose, Lucinda Davenport. 2012. *Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture, and Technology*, Seventh Edition. USA: Wadsworth

*Thanks to LP2M University Al Azhar Indonesia, Jakarta, which has supported partial funding as a presenter at this seminar.*