

UN-backed centre in Indonesia to explore how digital data can help development



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) with El-Mostafa Benlamlah, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Indonesia. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

2 October 2012 – A new United Nations-backed centre, launched today in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, will explore how digital data can help tackle development challenges by identifying population trends, behaviours and attitudes in real-time.

The centre – Pulse Lab Jakarta – will use the vast sources of real-time information produced in the country every day to find patterns, and potentially unveil emerging socio-economic crises as

they happen, helping policymakers respond with more targeted and timely interventions, according to a news release.

“Indonesia is a country where new approaches in development can be pioneered,” said the UN Resident Coordinator in Indonesia, El-Mostafa Benlamlih. “Other countries may benefit in the future from Indonesia’s bold approach to innovative data research through private-public partnerships.”

The centre will also bring together researchers from the Government, UN agencies, academia and the private sector to test, develop and spread approaches to apply digital data to development.

During the launch, Pulse Lab Jakarta presented its first research, focusing on the potential of using social media analytics to identify populations and regions under stress as a result of fluctuating commodity prices.

The centre’s researchers identified content in Indonesian twitter, blogs and other social media platforms from the past two-years related to price and supply of food and fuel, and analyzed them to understand volume, sentiment, mood and geographic origin.

The goal of the research was to see whether social media could help detect, quantify and understand trends related to the community’s concerns and coping strategies faster than official Government statistics.

The centre is part of [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon’s Global Pulse initiative, which seeks to harness countries’ expertise on digital data and analytics to gain a better understanding of changes in human well-being, protect the world's most vulnerable populations, and strengthen resilience to global shocks.

The centre is managed in partnership with the Government of Indonesia through its National Development Planning Agency.

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