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TTASSEA CONSOLIDATED REPORT 2020-2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed how we live, work, make, and experience art and culture. Covid-19 has changed us all and while this consolidated report is written the future remains uncertain.

In Southeast Asia, we understand this has been and remains a very difficult time for the traditional textile arts sector and artisans. At this time of uncertainty, the Traditional Textile Arts Society of Southeast Asia (TTASSEA) in partnership with other traditional textile organizations have explored innovations in digital technology and brought expert artisans and craft organisations to the fore.

This report documents the Traditional Textile Arts Society in Southeast Asia (TTASSEA) activities and the experience of the artisan. Through follow-up surveys it records the impact of the pandemic on the textile crafts sector in Indonesia. This report provides valuable insight on:

- The depth and scale of the impact on artisans, designers, and craft organisations.
- Systemic actions the sector has taken during Covid-19
- The potential of international collaboration between the textile organizations and among the ASEAN nations.
- The possibility of digital innovation and a reimagined sustainable supply chain.
- Recommendations for building capacity and resilience while there is a risk from economic recession and climate change. In the past year, Indonesia's textile artisans and design entrepreneurs have demonstrated resilience during the global challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The TTASSEA is an international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities – this is echoed in the long-term ambitions for the textile programme in Indonesia, spearheaded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Our digital series on the Impact of the pandemic on textile artisans responded to the pandemic in 2020- 2021 and brought together textile organisations in Indonesia and Southeast Asia to share expertise and insight online.

There are approximately a few million artisans in Indonesia. The Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia confirmed the impact of Covid-19 on the 88% of Indonesia's UMKM (Micro, Small and Medium Scale Businesses) who make up the creative industries in Indonesia has been significant - with many businesses closing permanently. It's more important than ever that we look to understand what a roadmap for recovery offers for Indonesia's creative crafts economy. The report spans the textile supply chain with valuable insights from consumers to artisans, to academicians. The report highlights the challenges faced by the sector and its markets.

The pandemic to some extent united many artisans and organizations and precipitated new ways of working to develop market opportunities through **collaboration**. Social media campaigns set the pulse for new collaborations for the first time. However, the long-term resilience of the traditional textile sector remains uncertain. We hope this report will be a useful part of a roadmap to recovery. Many thanks to the artisans, textile organizations, and

stakeholders who have contributed to this report and continue to represent the fabulous diversity of Indonesia's traditional textile economy.

Indonesia's traditional textile sector, one of the main employers in Indonesia with over millions of textile artisans, has experienced dramatic changes because of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. Consumption dropped, orders were cancelled, payments were stalled, traditional supply chains broke down, while unsold stocks accumulated, offline modes of selling products (exhibitions and fairs) stopped, and textile organisations financial reserves were drawn down to survive. In some instances, traditional textile clusters relied on State Government intervention for micro grants and food parcels. According to initial estimations the handicraft sector could suffer a loss of billions in ID Rupiahs post pandemic.

Several months after the lockdown restrictions were revoked, many arts and culture sectors continue to struggle to remain resilient from the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown. This report is a culmination of dialogues with stakeholders from the traditional textile sector - the artisans, textile organisations, civil societies, designers, brands, academicians, and social entrepreneurs. It highlights the struggles of artisans, discovers problems within the sector, talks about a recovery roadmap and presents recommendations for building long term resilience and sustainability in the traditional textiles sector.

Key insights from the report

- The pandemic and lockdown forced the most vulnerable artisans to choose between safeguarding lives or livelihoods. It triggered mass exodus of artisans from cities to their home villages to start farming and other agricultural jobs. In total 22 percent of the sector lost 75 percent of their monthly income (empirical data, Dr. Komarudin Kudiya, Media Indonesia, 4 October 2020).
- According to the survey of textile organizations and artisans, 44 percent faced cancellation of orders by the buyers and delay in payments, 58 percent made new products during the pandemic, while 26 percent shared that their business was negatively impacted due to the pandemic. UMKM (Micro, Small and Medium Scale Businesses) with less than IDR50 million work capital stopped their business altogether, because the batik *juragans* (the batik bosses, the buyers in bulk) were not able to sell the batiks to third parties. The main cause was the cancellation of various large-scale annual exhibitions such as INACraft, Adhiwastra Nusantara, and Katumbiri.
- The Central Government supported the sector by providing immediate relief (food and finance) and by raising awareness on supporting textile artisans through "Textile Artisans helping Textile Artisans" a relief campaign initiated by APPBI (*Asosiasi Pebatik dan Pengusaha Batik Indonesia*). The APPBI in collaboration with women's organizations, organized webinars, created online catalogues, and educated the masses through digital literacy. As such, many textile artisans were able to sell their products through a platform called "*bakulBatik*" (Batikbasket). Certain districts with higher concentration of artisans, such as Pekalongan, Cirebon, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya launched schemes specifically for craft clusters and artisans.
- The traditional weaving sector was also hard hit by the pandemic, especially those weavers living in the central part of Sulawesi, Toraja (Gatra.com, 28 Jan.2021) and the eastern part of Indonesia (Kumparan.com, 29 May 2020), because these areas were relying on tourism. One of the brighter reports came from Ende, Flores, where a shortage of weavings existed during the pandemic because of the lengthy weaving time required to produce one piece of outfit, and the many rituals held in the community such as weddings and inaugurations of a new village head, that required the use of traditional weavings (Republika.co.id, 24 March 2022).

The pandemic delivered a more severe blow to smaller, individual artisans, therefore the UMKM, the smaller businesses adopted a competitive strategy by differentiating products every week, applied innovation and creativity, while implementing friendly and excellent service to consumers (Mohammad Rosyada and Anah Wigiawati, IAIN

Pekalongan). In another district, the Bupati of Serang Ratu Tatu Chasanah started a movement to help local batik artisans by innovating batik with new motifs (detikNews, 6 March 2022).

- The uncertainty during the pandemic brought fragmented stakeholders together for collective action. This fostered innovation, skills exchange, skills development, and collaboration amongst stakeholders that usually work in silos.
- Access to working capital and credit is largely through informal channels and money lenders at exorbitant interest rates. During the pandemic, according to Bank Indonesia's statistics 19.7% of the sector had accessed bank loans (Loan Market, 2 Aug.2021), while Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI) initiated digital lending (Bisnis.com, 28 June 2020).

Key recommendations

Several recommendations have been identified to shape the recovery of the traditional textile sector, some of which have been summarised below:

- The sector recovery has started but will take a long time to completely recover from the impact. Continued financial support should be provided to artisans and organisations through CSR funds, low interest loans and grants from global organisations.
- Capacity building for artisans should reflect the current and emerging market needs. The curriculum should include digital and financial skills literacy.
- Artisan welfare and progress should be focussed with instituting living wages, representation of artisans in decision forums, developing opportunities for alternative income streams and scaling up access to formal credit and Government schemes.
- The visibility and value of textiles can be amplified through textile tourism, cultural districts, virtual tours, the wearing of batik or woven textiles at the office or in schools, and textile arts education in schools.
- Incentivize innovation and investment in textile craft to accelerate development. Public-private partnerships could be built to support financially, administratively or for strengthening business models.
- Nation-wide artisan mapping to assess the number of artisans in Indonesia, their social and financial status to bridge the data gap. This will enable targeted interventions and policies.
- There is a need to shift the perspective and approach of the traditional textile arts sector from informal, unorganized, and charitable to recognized, business oriented, and important contributors to the Indonesian economy.

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Respectfully submitted to ASEAN,



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