



Surabaya

Enabling and Engaging Citizens



Surabaya's mobile libraries increase citizens' access to books and educational materials.

In the past decades, Surabaya has transformed from an emerging town into a clean and green metropolis focusing on inclusive growth. **Alvin Chua** explores how Indonesia's second largest city built trust, reduced corruption and boosted liveability, education and economic growth through a range of people-centric efforts.

For Surabaya's three million residents, the integrated municipal reporting and management system known as Command Center 112 is more than a three-digit hotline to report traffic accidents, floods or other emergencies. It is a direct line to the heart of the city government, where various real-time monitoring platforms and resources come together to coordinate public services.

This example underlines Mayor Tri Rismaharini's citizen-centric approach towards urban liveability, economic development, education and equity. Under her lead, Surabaya focuses on public sector integrity and strengthening institutions and trust.

The city government's initiatives to promote inclusive growth and transparent public services have helped to engender trust between citizens and the public sector, while boosting liveability and socio-economic resilience of Indonesia's second largest city.

Inclusive growth and transparent public services have helped to engender trust.



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Going Digital for Transparency and Trust

At the forefront of Surabaya's efforts to build trust are digital platforms that provide transparency in interactions between the government and the private sector. Companies can apply for business licenses or permits to use public facilities through the Surabaya Single Window system, instead of having to go through a more lengthy paperwork process. The transparent process has also increased citizens' faith in the local economy.

The Government Resources Management System provides a cross-sectional view of public budgets and the implementation, procurement, monitoring and evaluation of services, ensuring accountability across these areas.

These efforts have reduced corruption in Surabaya's public sector while improving public services and city budgeting. In 2011, Indonesia's National Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK when abbreviated in Indonesian) ranked Surabaya first for its anti-corruption initiatives. The city also ranked second in the KPK's Public Sector Integrity Survey of 2013, and scored well on the KPK's assessment of citizens' access to information and transparency in procurement. These measures have also resulted in significant savings on the city's budget.



City officers who control traffic signals at Command Center 112 ensure smooth roads and help emergency services reach victims in a shorter time.



A mobile library in a park provides citizens with easy and casual access to information.



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By shifting to digital systems, the city government cut its annual spending on paper costs from 29 billion rupiah (S\$2.76 million) to 9 billion rupiah (S\$857,000). “Our budget can be more efficient and the surplus budget that we save can be allocated for public service delivery,” added Mayor Rismaharini.

Beyond tapping technology, the Surabaya administration has also worked to gain the citizens’ trust by improving education, liveability and livelihoods.

Improving Education

To extend the reach of education and improve trust through a better-informed citizenry, Surabaya has sought to reform its formal education sector.

School fees up to the high school level have been waived to encourage children to stay in

school, while some *kampung* (Indonesian for ‘village’) communities have mandated evening study times. Some challenges remain, including the fact that some schools still charge miscellaneous fees that exclude the economically-disadvantaged, but the municipality is pushing for bureaucratic and legislative reforms to address these issues.

To enable citizens to access government services online, Surabaya has established over 40 Broadband Learning Centres that provide free internet and digital media lessons. More than 1,500 public libraries are spread throughout the city, including mobile ones in parks. These learning facilities equip citizens with digital skills, improve their economic prospects and help them interact with the government and society at large in more informed and meaningful ways.

Enhancing Liveability

Dealing with urban issues efficiently to run a sustainable, liveable city is a direct way for local governments to earn the citizens’ trust. This principle is well understood in Surabaya, which maintains a clean and green environment through parks, green spaces and high public cleanliness standards. Green spaces and better drainage infrastructure have helped to reduce the city’s flood-prone areas from around half of its land area to less than 3%.

Citizen participation is vital in sustaining the liveability of the city and its surroundings. Surabaya worked to provide infrastructure such as street lighting in *kampung* areas as a first step towards improving neighbourhood security and economic accessibility. The next step, said Mayor Rismaharini, was to invite the community to “manage their cleanliness in *kampungs*...together with informal leaders and public figures”. Involving citizens gives them a stake in the environment, strengthening trust and collaboration in local governance.

“Inclusive growth that benefits the citizens in turn reinforces the bonds of trust throughout society.”

While considering tram and other rail systems, the local government remains mindful of the need to ensure affordability of transportation. Surabaya’s bus service accepts plastic bottles for fares, to encourage the use of public transport, which is less polluting than private vehicles. This also helps to establish a culture of recycling and a sense of citizen ownership of the environment.

01 Residents going about their everyday activities in a *kampung* in Surabaya.

02 Citizens taking ownership of their environment by cleaning their *kampung*.

“Dealing with urban issues efficiently to run a sustainable, liveable city is a direct way for local governments to earn the citizens’ trust.”

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Creating Economic Growth and Opportunities

Inclusive growth that benefits the citizens in turn reinforces the bonds of trust throughout society. On the economic front, Surabaya has numerous initiatives to help citizens adapt their trades for the digital age, such as entrepreneurship programmes, retraining and skills initiatives and efforts to encourage the city’s digital services economy. These strengthen the citizens’ economic resilience and ensure they are not left behind in Surabaya’s growth story.

These programmes are centred on inclusive growth and the multiplier effect of strong communities. Mayor Rismaharini explained: “We provide training for housewives living in *kampungs* on cooking, sewing, making handicrafts and then helping them to sell their products. As their businesses grow bigger, they invite other housewives in their surroundings to work in the same business.”

The city’s entrepreneurship programmes are tailored to different segments of society—the Economic Heroes programme empowers women and their families, while the Young Warriors programme supports youths to build start-ups in their areas of interest. Budding businesses receive support to build e-commerce platforms and improve products, marketing and packaging.

Surabaya has also begun to establish urban farming and fishing as growth sectors, generating revenue of over US\$700,000 (S\$965,000) per month. Other programmes to promote economic benefits from recycling, waste management and organic waste composting have created jobs and strengthened the city’s environmental emphasis.

All in all, Surabaya’s blend of people-centric initiatives have earned it accolades, such as the 2018 Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize Special Mention, for brewing trust and promoting inclusive growth. 

- 01 Surabaya encourages recycling by allowing citizens to pay for bus rides with plastic bottles.
- 02 Shoemaking activity at Dolly Saiki Point, a former red-light district that has been converted to house local businesses focused on textiles and shoes. The government also offers classes to train women in relevant skills.
- 03 The community weighing their own waste at the local waste bank.