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## STRENGTHENING PLURALISM AND TOLERANCE AMONG YOUTH

Rising intolerance and extremism threaten Indonesian democracy while undermining stability and development. Youth, representing 25 percent of Indonesia's 261 million people, are particularly vulnerable to hate speech, mis/disinformation, and radical messages. The United States partners with local civil society organizations to promote interfaith and interethnic tolerance and pluralism, especially among Indonesia's youth.

Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders express increasing concern that the health of Indonesian democracy is threatened by rising intolerance, including growing religious exclusivism and rising inequality for minorities. These problems are particularly pronounced in the education system, which shows signs of rising intolerance among teachers and students. For example, a 2017 survey by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society showed that 47 percent of high school and university students were reluctant to socialize with people of different backgrounds, while a 2016 survey by the Wahid Institute examining instructors of extracurricular *roh'is* (Islamic spirituality lectures) revealed that 60 percent of surveyed instructors reporting willingness to travel to conflict areas to engage in *jihad*.

### USAID CREATE

USAID's Creative Youth for Tolerance (CREATE) is a three-year, \$3.33 million program implemented by Stichting Hivos (HIVOS) in partnership with three local organizations.

USAID CREATE pursues an innovative arts and culture-based approach as an entry point for promoting tolerance and pluralism among students, to enhance the capacity and will of young Indonesians to constructively manage differences and to counter intolerant messages they receive from other sources. Art and culture have proven effective in building networks and providing space for the development of shared experiences and meaning among diverse groups; such approaches are all the more important for students in their formative periods, as they endeavor to balance their emotional and moral development and self-exploration with conflicting virtual and social interactions that instead promote hatred and mis/disinformation. To address this challenge, USAID CREATE will foster constructive dialogue among diverse communities, facilitate networking among key stakeholders, and provide positive outlets for expression towards promoting greater interfaith and interethnic understanding among students, teachers, parents, and government stakeholders.

USAID CREATE will work in 24 high schools, both state (secular) and *madrasah aliyah* (Islamic), in three Indonesian provinces, West Java, East Java, and South Sulawesi, where research has identified particularly high rates of violations against religious freedom, including discriminatory regulations against minority groups

## RESULTS

USAID CREATE will work with Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and local organizations to (1) strengthen the ability of artists to develop interactive, collaborative models that engage students in creative expression; (2) improve the awareness of Indonesian students on issues such as democracy and human rights; (3) enhance teachers' capacity to incorporate values of tolerance and pluralism in their classrooms; and (4) work with parents, teachers, and school principals to promote stronger school-level policies on tolerance and pluralism.

By 2022, USAID CREATE will have cultivated a cadre of graduating students who will serve as examples of tolerance for their peers and communities; a network of teachers and parents empowered to monitor and address incidents of intolerance; and a proven approach to promoting pluralism for integration and replication into government initiatives.

## CONTACT

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