

Gotong Royong Through Virtual World

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(Full article in Indonesian)

JAKARTA, SERAYUNEWS.COM- *Gotong royong* (=mutual help) is a trait of Indonesian society. Through mutual help of the community, people can solve problem such as building roads so the flow of traffic becomes smoother, cleaning up sewers or drains to anticipate flooding and eradicate dengue fever, as well as community clean-up for a more beautiful and sustainable neighborhood. But all of that is long gone. The value of *gotong royong* has faded, especially in urban communities.



To restore the spirit of *gotong royong*, an application for smart phones is available in Indonesia. The app is called **AtmaGo**. **AtmaGo** is an application on smart phones that can connect between residents in one location close together. **AtmaGo** can be used as a medium of communication between citizens in different sub-districts or regencies.

Nene Sumiyati, 35-year-old woman from RT 04 RW 12 Penjaringan, Penjaringan Sub-

district, North Jakarta, is one of **AtmaGo**'s users. Through the application, Sumiyati organized RT 04 residents to work together to clean up water culverts in the neighborhood. Clean water culverts improve water drainage and can greatly improve the neighborhood which is situated in a densely populated area. A typical RT in Penjaringan can have more than 175 households, whereas an RT in Pondok Benda Village, Pamulang Sub-district, South Tangerang, is inhabited by only 75 households. So one can imagine the living condition in RT 04 Penjaringan.

The population density in Penjaringan has caused many problems, one of them is household garbage and sewage disposal. Water culverts are full of garbage and as a result water drainage becomes blocked. Clean-up crews from the department of sanitation cannot be relied on every

time to solve the problem because they have to solve similar problem in other areas in Jakarta as well.

Solving the problem independently is the best thing to do. Sumiyati along with the RT committee organized youths to clean up the sewers. On Thursday, August 17th, 2017, on Indonesia's Independence Day, the youths in RT 04 of Penjaringan work together to remove garbage that clogged up the culverts. "We have skilled people who can dive in the dirty sewers (to remove clogs)," Sumiyati told Serayunews.com. Within two hours, dozens of bags filled with garbage are collected from the sewers in RT 04.

The community clean-up was followed by many games and competition typically held by communities in Independence Day, such as sack race, drawing competition, or *dangdut* (=Indonesian folk song) dancing. In the midst of the competition, **AtmaGo** activists like, Sumiyati and Unggul Cahyono Edi introduce the mobile application to citizens of RT 04. "**AtmaGo** is an alternative medium for citizens to communicate with each other," said Unggul who is also the Secretary of RT 04.

Alfan Rodhi, Director of **AtmaGo** Indonesia, who was also present at the community clean-up in RT 04, appreciated Penjaringan citizens who used the app. According to Alfan, **AtmaGo** aims to strengthen the relationship between citizens. Strong relationships can be a power for citizens to solve problems that has not been solved. Indonesian culture and values like *gotong royong* has made it easy for the app to be used by residents.

Besides community clean-up, the app can also be used for personal purposes as well as community-related purposes. Alfan shared the story of a masseuse in Pluit area of North Jakarta who actively uses **AtmaGo** to get customers in the surrounding area. As a result, he has gained many customers from the app.

A similar story is also experienced by a committee member of a religious boarding school in Lamongan, East Java who faced difficulties to gather funding for the school. Through **AtmaGo**, the committee announced that the school is in need of funding donation. People from around the radius of several kilometers from the boarding school enthusiastically donated for the construction of the school. As a result, the lack of funding has been somewhat eased. Those are some of the many uses of **AtmaGo** that has created positive impacts by users in some neighborhoods.

Alfan hopes **AtmaGo** can be utilized by residents in all districts, especially citizens of middle to lower economic class. "Average **AtmaGo** users are of middle to low-income," he said. **AtmaGo** is currently used by residents in Jakarta Bekasi, Tangerang, Subang, Yogyakarta, Lamongan, and Malang. Alfan is very open to add **AtmaGo**'s coverage in other areas. Other possible areas include Cilacap, Banyumas, and Kebumen in Central Java.



Alfan says each region has its own characteristics in using **AtmaGo**. There are areas whose users are eager to use **AtmaGo** to share information about public services. These are usually by users in urban areas such as Jakarta, Tangerang, and Bekasi. While in Subang, West Java, **AtmaGo** users tend to inform things related to art and culture. "**AtmaGo**'s color is strongly influenced by its users," said Caprit campaigner of **AtmaGo** in Subang.

With many different characteristics, Alfan added, residents who want to use **AtmaGo** in Cilacap can determine their own unique "color" for **AtmaGo**. For example, users can use the app for public service reporting, ranging from damaged roads to health services.

Aan, a food hawker and a manager of Widarapayung Village Community in Cilacap, said that an app that connects residents will greatly help the residents themselves. Aan's assessment refers to his experience in managing the Facebook Group of Widarayapung. From the group, residents can share information about news, happenings, and events around Widarapayung. However his FB group is just at the stage of sharing information only.

Aan hopes his group can mobilize residents to hold events or programs that are beneficial to the community (like **AtmaGo**). "If you can help, please help the less fortunate," he said. After knowing that AtmaG can be used to mobilize residents (for community work), Aan is interested to try the application. "As long as the application is free, it needs to be tried in Cilacap," he said.