

## **Strategies For Building Peace in Multicultural Society in The Digital Era: New Challenges and Inclusive Approaches**

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### **Abstract**

*The digital era has changed the dynamics of social interaction, including in multicultural societies, by expanding communication spaces while simultaneously presenting new challenges in the form of polarization, the spread of hoaxes, and cultural stereotypes. This article aims to analyze peacebuilding strategies in multicultural societies in the digital era through an inclusive approach that emphasizes digital literacy, legal awareness, and ethical online interactions. The research method used is qualitative, with a desk study approach and normative analysis of academic literature, regulations, and best practices in maintaining social harmony. The analysis results indicate that an effective strategy requires a combination of formal and non-formal education to improve digital literacy, ongoing public campaigns to build social and legal awareness, and multi-stakeholder collaboration between the government, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and technology platforms. This inclusive approach is expected to not only strengthen individuals' capacity to respond to the dynamics of cyberspace but also create a safe, harmonious digital space that supports the strengthening of humanitarian values and social cohesion in multicultural societies. These findings contribute to academic thinking on digital-based peacebuilding and adaptive strategies in the context of cultural plurality.*

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**Keywords: digital literacy, peace, multicultural society, social inclusion, digital media**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Peace is a vital normative and practical foundation within the legal framework and governance of pluralistic societies. In a multicultural society, where religious, ethnic, cultural, and social identities interact across a complex spectrum, the concept of peace is not merely about the absence of physical conflict, but also about the fulfillment of human rights, equality before the law, and the recognition of diversity as legitimate social capital. Therefore, peacebuilding requires a comprehensive and inclusive strategy that bridges structural, relational, and cultural differences, while strengthening social cohesion through a legal framework that is just and responsive to contemporary social dynamics.

The digital transformation that has taken place over the past few decades has drastically changed the way individuals and groups interact, communicate, and produce information. The digital space has now become a strategic public arena where opinions are formed, collective identities are formed, and social discourses are contested. The emergence of social media and other digital communication platforms has expanded opportunities for intercultural dialogue, but at the same time, it has also created new challenges in the form of polarization, misinformation, hate speech, and symbolic conflict that can weaken peaceful social structures. This phenomenon of 'digital conflict' is no longer simply a matter of information, but has implications for broader social relations, including social mobilization, discriminatory practices, and shifting social norms in multicultural societies. Studies show that the dissemination of peace messages on social media is a strategic yet complex area, where challenges such as hoaxes and hate speech continue to hamper its effectiveness in creating a culture of peace.<sup>1</sup>

The dynamics of digitalization demand adaptive regulatory reforms and law enforcement to balance freedom of expression with protection against hate speech and discriminatory content. Freedom of expression in the digital space is a pillar of modern democracy, but the line between freedom of opinion and hate speech is often unclear and creates complex normative dilemmas, particularly when such speech targets ethnic groups or spreads intolerance. Legal responses must be preventative, substantial, and legitimizing, not merely repressive, to maintain order and justice

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<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Zaky and Rika Dilawati, "Realizing Peace in the Digital World: Community Participation in Spreading Messages of Peace on Social Media," *Open Integrity: Peace and Interfaith Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024), <http://journal.integritasterbuka.id/index.php/integritas/article/view/26>



in a pluralistic social structure.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, digitalization has created strategic opportunities for peace efforts by increasing public participation in dialogue and conflict resolution processes. The concept of digital inclusion<sup>3</sup>The digital inclusion framework in peace processes emphasizes the importance of access and engagement of diverse stakeholder groups, including those who have been marginalized, as a crucial element in enhancing legitimacy in mediation and sustainable peacebuilding processes. This digital inclusion framework highlights that technology is not only a technical tool but also a strategic medium for expanding participation, empowering the voices of women and minority groups, and strengthening constructive social relationships among diverse actors.

Effective peacebuilding strategies in the digital era must address the structural aspects and social agents involved in the digital ecosystem. An inclusive approach demands the formulation of policies that enhance people's digital literacy, enabling them to critically navigate information and actively participate in cross-cultural dialogue. Furthermore, utilizing digital platforms as spaces for education and interfaith or intercultural dialogue can strengthen shared values and foster mutual respect. Case studies of digital activism through social media, such as Instagram's role in interfaith dialogue, demonstrate that strategic use of digital tools can build community engagement and expand interactions that support peace.<sup>4</sup>

Without effective regulation, the digital space has the potential to reinforce inequality, polarization, and social exclusion, triggering real conflict. Therefore, a legal approach must integrate digital rights protection with normative obligations that guarantee justice, non-discrimination, and human rights, including through pro-vulnerable group regulations, law enforcement against hate speech, and transparency and accountability mechanisms for digital platforms. This research aims to explore the impact of digitalization on the dynamics of conflict and peace in multicultural societies and formulate inclusive strategies for policymakers and legal practitioners, with the hope of contributing to the development of responsive contemporary legal

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<sup>2</sup>Sudaryat Sudaryat, "Implementation of the Principle of Balance Between Freedom of Speech and Protection Against Hate Speech in Digital Space," *Journal of Law, Social Sciences and Economics* 1, no. 1 (2023), <https://loddosinstitute.org/journal/index.php/ateku/article/download/71/60/512>.

<sup>3</sup>CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA), and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Digital Inclusion in Peace Processes – No Silver Bullet, but a Major Opportunity," PRIO, May 25, 2023, <https://www.prio.org/news/3055>.

<sup>4</sup>Wahyuni, Dwi, and Intan Karlina. 2024. "Digital Activism for Peace: Exploring Instagram's Role in Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia". *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan* 8 (2): 110-23. <https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v8i2.8740>.



theory and applicable policy recommendations for just and sustainable peace.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs a normative legal research method that focuses on examining legal norms, principles, and doctrines governing freedom of expression, hate speech, and the protection of minority rights in the digital space. The approaches employed include a statutory and conceptual approach, examining national and international laws and regulations, legal doctrine, and theories relevant to peacebuilding and multicultural societies in the digital age.

The legal materials used consist of primary legal materials in the form of relevant laws and court decisions, as well as secondary legal materials in the form of textbooks, scientific journals, and relevant academic publications. All legal materials are analyzed using normative-prescriptive analysis, interpreting legal norms systematically and coherently to formulate legal arguments and normative recommendations that support the development of inclusive and equitable peace in a digital multicultural society.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Impact of Digitalization on the Dynamics of Conflict and Peace*

The Republic of Indonesia is a multicultural and complex state entity, characterized by ethnic diversity, beliefs, languages, and customs integrated within a single national territory. Throughout the nation's history, this plurality has not only served as a strategic socio-political asset but has also created dynamic challenges in the administration of national and state life.<sup>5</sup>

The development of digital technology has disrupted various aspects of social and legal life, including communication mechanisms, public participation, and public discourse. Social media and digital platforms have become primary spaces for social interaction, often accelerating the spread of information and public opinion. However, the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and provocative content has become a factor capable of undermining social cohesion in multicultural societies.<sup>6</sup> For example, empirical research shows that multiculturalism content in social media content can change people's behavior and attitudes, including strengthening intolerance and

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<sup>5</sup>Tyas, E. H., & Naibaho, L. (2020). A Harmony Among Religious Communities Is Required Amidst The Covid-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH*, 8(9).

<sup>6</sup>Buddy Riyanto, "Social Media and Multiculturalism," *Research Fair Unisri* 3, no. 1 (January 2019), <https://doi.org/10.33061/rsfu.v3i1.2579>.



creating social conflict if not managed critically.<sup>7</sup> Hate speech based on ethnic or religious identity can easily be disseminated through social media without effective control mechanisms. In some contexts, cultural identities are even reduced to political instruments or commodified for specific ideological interests. This situation indicates that the digitalization process, if not accompanied by an adequate ethical framework and multicultural awareness, has the potential to deepen social fragmentation and weaken social cohesion in pluralistic societies.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main challenges in a multicultural society is how digital space can strengthen the filter bubble phenomenon,<sup>9</sup> and echo chambers, a situation where social media algorithms tend to present information that aligns with users' views, while marginalizing or filtering out dissenting information. This phenomenon has implications for individuals' limited exposure to diverse perspectives, potentially reinforcing social polarization and hampering the deliberative function of the digital public sphere.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this phenomenon, individuals tend to be isolated within homogeneous groups, significantly narrowing the scope for empathy toward other social or cultural groups. In the context of a multicultural society, this condition poses serious risks, as it can trigger cultural intolerance and reinforce invisible social segregation.

Furthermore, the digital divide is a structural challenge that exacerbates pre-existing social inequalities. Indigenous communities, remote communities, and economically disadvantaged groups often face limited access to digital devices, reliable internet connections, and adequate digital literacy skills. As a result, these groups are marginalized from the production and distribution of information and have minimal representation in digital public discourse. This situation results in what can be called "digital exclusion," where social engagement is hampered by limited access to information and communication technology, thus threatening the principle of inclusivity in the digital public sphere.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, low digital literacy among the public is a significant obstacle to building a healthy, inclusive, and deliberative digital space. Digital literacy encompasses more than just

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<sup>7</sup>Buddy Riyanto, "Social Media and Multiculturalism," Research Fair Unisri 3, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33061/rsfu.v3i1.2579>.

<sup>8</sup>Alimin Alwi, "Digital Transformation and Dynamics of Multicultural Society in the Era of Society 5.0," in Information Transformation and Digitalization in the Era of Society 5.0 (IACS-TIDES 2025), Doctoral Program in Sociology (2025), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>Izza Namira, "7 'Scary' Facts About Filter Bubbles, Virtual Bubbles That Filter Information," IDN Times, August 26, 2020, <https://www.idntimes.com/tech/trend/fakta-filter-bubble-00-4mlw3-8873zz>. IDN Times

<sup>10</sup>Peralta, A. F., Neri, M., Kertész, J., & Iñiguez, G. (2021). Effect of algorithmic bias and network structure on coexistence, consensus, and polarization of opinions. *Physical Review E*, 104(4).

<sup>11</sup>Alimin Alwi, Loc.cit., p. 12



technical skills in using technological devices; it also encompasses critical thinking skills, contextual understanding of information, and awareness of the social implications of every digital activity. Within a multicultural society, digital literacy needs to be directed toward developing cross-cultural sensitivity and the capacity for ethical dialogue in the virtual realm.<sup>12</sup>

Without a critical approach to technology use, the digital space has the potential to reinforce social differences and deepen identity polarization. Digitalization should, in fact, be a means to bridge differences, strengthen equality, and build new solidarity amidst a diverse society. Therefore, decisive and systematic policy interventions in digital literacy based on the principles of multiculturalism are needed, including strengthening educational curricula, regulating digital platforms, and encouraging the active participation of grassroots communities as part of a social inclusion strategy.<sup>13</sup>

Critical reflection is needed on how technology is interpreted in the context of a multicultural society. Is technology positioned solely as a tool, or also as a cultural space that must be filled with dialogical and reflective values? Without the deliberate formation of a digital society based on inclusive principles, digital transformation risks becoming a hegemonic instrument that reinforces the dominance of certain cultures while excluding marginalized voices.

Thus, the challenges facing multicultural societies in the digital age extend beyond technical aspects such as infrastructure or algorithms, but also to ideologies, values, and social practices. Therefore, Indonesian society must rethink how we use technology so that digital spaces can be enjoyed equitably by all and become an inclusive common good, not just the preserve of those who are most culturally dominant, most quickly connected, or most vocal in the digital public sphere.

### ***Strategies for Building Inclusive Peace in the Digital Age***

#### ***1. Improving multicultural cultural education***

Digital media has become an effective tool for strengthening cross-cultural understanding, both through the use of digital education platforms and social media. In this context, digital cultural literacy is becoming increasingly urgent, especially for the younger generation, as it

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<sup>12</sup>Muh Nur Fakhri, Farah Nurul Zakiah, and Lely Novia, "Digital Literacy and Cultural Awareness as a Solution to the Challenge of Atemporality in Intercultural Communication," *Al-Jamahiria* 3, no. 1 (January–June 2025), <https://doi.org/10.30983/al-jamahiria.v3i1.9841>,

<sup>13</sup>Aisyah Nur Hidayah and Ranu Iskandar, "Wise Use of Social Media: Digital Literacy as a Pillar of Modern Humanity," *Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 2, no. 5 (June 2025): 764–768, <https://doi.org/10.62017/merdeka>



prepares them for increasingly intensive global interactions.<sup>14</sup> Social medias not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a space for interaction between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, thus enabling the exchange of experiences and perspectives that have the potential to reduce stereotypes and cultural prejudices.

Pratamawaty<sup>15</sup> emphasizes that cross-cultural interactions, including in the context of marriages between Indonesian citizens and foreign nationals, can deepen understanding of differences in cultural values, norms, and customs, while also uncovering the accompanying social and legal challenges. This demonstrates that social media can play a strategic role in building understanding, tolerance, and appreciation for cultural diversity on a global scale.

Through social media platforms, individuals have the ability to connect and communicate directly, enabling the exchange of ideas, values, and experiences that enrich cross-cultural understanding. This facility broadens the horizons of social interaction, allowing individuals from different countries or communities to interact even without physically meeting. In the context of globalization, social media provides a broader communication reach than traditional communication mechanisms.

Research shows that intensive social interaction through digital spaces not only increases the volume of communication but also influences the formation of public opinion and awareness of cultural diversity. Dialogues occurring in the digital realm often present new perspectives that differ from users' cultures, thus encouraging the formation of more open and tolerant attitudes, along with increased awareness of the importance of cultural plurality. Thus, social media functions not only as a means of communication but also as a normative instrument in the formation of inclusive social opinion and awareness. Furthermore, social media plays a strategic role in promoting tolerance and intercultural acceptance, particularly in a multicultural country like Indonesia, thus contributing to strengthening social cohesion and digital inclusion.<sup>16</sup>

However, the use of social media also carries potential risks. Anwar<sup>17</sup> noted that

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<sup>14</sup>LM Indrayani, RM Amalia, and E. Citraresmana, "Digital Cultural Literacy: A Strategy for Building a Smart, Characterful, and Polite Generation," *Dharmakarya* 12, no. 3 (2023): 349, <https://doi.org/10.24198/dharmakarya.v12i3.39153>.

<sup>15</sup>BB Pratamawaty, "Potential for Cross-Cultural Marital Conflict between Indonesian Women and Caucasian Men," *Kafa'ah: Journal of Gender Studies* 7, no. 1 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.15548/jk.v7i1.166>.

<sup>16</sup>Umar Farisal, Tantry Widiyanarti, Mei Krismonica Sianturi, Anindha Jelytha Ningrum, Yulia Fatimah, Putri Dwi Hastuti, Adi Abdilah, and Willy Kristantio Desmonda, "Connecting the World: The Role of Digital Media in Overcoming Cultural Divides," *Indonesian Culture and Religion Issues* 1, no. 4 (2024): 1–10, <https://diksima.pubmedia.id/index.php/diksima>.

<sup>17</sup>F. Anwar, "Changes and Problems of Social Media," *Muara Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora, dan Seni* 1, no. 1



uncontrolled use of social media can trigger shifts in cultural values and give rise to social problems, such as a decline in the quality of direct social interactions. Therefore, systematic educational efforts are needed regarding the wise, ethical, and responsible use of digital media. With proper management, digital media can function as a constructive tool for increasing cross-cultural understanding and supporting the formation of an inclusive and harmonious society.

## **2. Improving Digital Literacy as a Foundation for Peace**

UNESCO comprehensively defines digital literacy as an individual's capacity to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and produce information safely and appropriately through digital technology, with the aim of supporting the fulfillment of the rights to decent work, entrepreneurship, and substantive economic participation. This definition emphasizes that digital literacy is not merely a technical mastery of technological devices, but also includes high-level critical and analytical thinking skills that are prerequisites for normative adaptation and effective participation in various sectors of life, including social, economic, and educational.

Digital media, while providing numerous benefits in expanding access to information and communication, also poses serious challenges with implications for social and legal order, particularly related to the spread of stereotypes and increased polarization. The distribution of negative content through social media often widens cultural gaps by reinforcing narrow views and stereotypes about certain groups. Several studies have shown that social media is often used as a means of disseminating inaccurate or misleading information, which has the potential to trigger intercultural conflict and disrupt social order.<sup>18</sup>

Stereotypes formed as a result of this flow of information not only cause harm to individuals, but also have a systemic impact on social dynamics by creating tension and fragmentation between community groups.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, polarization in digital spaces often emerges in social and political contexts, especially when individuals are constantly exposed to content that aligns with their personal preferences and views, thus reinforcing biases and hindering the ability to interact rationally and constructively with others from different

(2017): 137, <https://doi.org/10.24912/jmishumsen.v1i1.343>.

<sup>18</sup>Diego and Y. Lestari, "COVID-19 Vaccine Polarization: A Study of Hoax News and Populism in Padang City," Expression and Perception: Journal of Communication Studies 6, no. 2 (2023): 349–359, <https://doi.org/10.33822/jep.v6i2.5176>.

<sup>19</sup>P. Prasojo, "The Impact of Social Media Use on Changes in Political Culture," Journal of Scientific Studies 21, no. 2 (2021): 209–218, <https://doi.org/10.31599/jki.v21i2.590>.



backgrounds.<sup>20</sup>In such conditions, the younger generation as dominant users of social media bears the normative and social responsibility to play an active role in preventing the spread of hoaxes and negative content that exacerbates polarization.<sup>21</sup>Therefore, strengthening digital literacy oriented towards critical understanding, ethics, and compliance with legal norms is an urgent need so that users are able to assess, filter, and utilize digital information responsibly.

Popular cultural phenomena circulating on social media have the potential to produce problematic and stereotypical representations that are detrimental to certain cultural groups, which can have legal implications regarding the protection of human rights, reputation, and intellectual property rights. For example, viral content on digital platforms like TikTok often contains inaccurate narratives or cultural representations, reinforcing existing stereotypes and risking legal liability for those who spread it.<sup>22</sup>This shows that while social media has the capacity to promote cultural diversity, the platforms also risk becoming a vehicle for the spread of narrow, discriminatory, and prejudiced views.

In addressing these risks, strengthening media literacy and developing critical thinking skills are essential legal and social tools for society to appropriately assess, filter, and respond to digital information. Digital literacy-based education serves as a preventative mechanism, enabling individuals to understand and address negative content, while also encouraging constructive and ethical cross-cultural interactions.<sup>23</sup> Thus, although digital media has the potential to reinforce stereotypes and trigger polarization, the collective application of educational and normative strategies can create a digital ecosystem that is inclusive, harmonious, and compliant with legal and ethical principles.

### **3. Equal Access to Technology**

The main challenge arises from the disparity in access to and quality of digital education, particularly in remote areas or communities with economic constraints. Unequal access to digital media in remote areas is a key determinant of deepening cultural divides. In these areas, limited

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<sup>20</sup>IM Kartika and IPB Mustika, "The Role of the Young Generation in Countering Hoaxes on Social Media to Build a Culture of Democracy in Indonesia," JOCER: Journal of Civic Education Research 1, no. 2 (2023): 29–40, <https://doi.org/10.60153/jocer.v1i2.26>.

<sup>21</sup>K. Komariah and DS Kartini, "Social Media and the Political Culture of the Millennial Generation in Elections," ARISTO 7, no. 2 (2019): 228, <https://doi.org/10.24269/ars.v7i2.1608>.

<sup>22</sup>I. Irwanto and LR Hariatiningsih, "Amplification of Bonge-Jeje Pop Culture Through TikTok Social Media," Journal of Communication 14, no. 1 (2023): 122–131, <https://doi.org/10.31294/jkom.v14i1.15067>.

<sup>23</sup>L. Qadrini, "Strengthening Healthy and Smart Internet Literacy for the Community of Pamboborang Village, Banggae District, Majene Regency Towards a Healthy Internet Village," Community Development Journal: Journal of Community Service 3, no. 3 (2022): 3, <https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v3i3.7917>.



access to information and technology results in communities lagging behind national and global information developments.<sup>24</sup>

Unequal access to digital media creates gaps in intercultural knowledge and understanding, potentially isolating communities in remote areas from broader cultural ideas, practices, and discourses, which in turn can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices against other groups. Furthermore, this unequal access significantly impacts public participation in democratic processes and decision-making. Communities without adequate access to digital media tend to be less engaged in public discourse and have limited ability to voice their concerns on issues affecting collective life (Hidayat, 2023). Research shows that citizen engagement in the digital realm is a crucial element for strengthening democracy, but this goal is difficult to achieve if access to digital media is unequal.<sup>25</sup>

To mitigate this problem, structured collaboration between the government, non-governmental organizations, and local communities is needed to expand access to digital media in remote areas. Implementing digital literacy programs and developing adequate technological infrastructure are normative prerequisites to ensure that communities in remote areas have the capacity to access information equally and participate substantively in social, cultural, and political life.<sup>26</sup> Thus, expanding access to digital media not only serves as a mechanism for reducing information and cultural gaps, but also as an instrument for strengthening social inclusion, public representation, and democratic participation in the digital public sphere.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building peace in multicultural societies in the digital era requires strategies that are inclusive, holistic, and based on humanitarian values. Digitalization has transformed the way individuals and groups interact, convey identity, and form communities, while also presenting challenges such as hate speech, disinformation, cultural stereotypes, social polarization, and unequal access to technology. Therefore, the digital space has the potential to be both a unifying

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<sup>24</sup>MF Bormasa, "Bridging the Social Gap: Activities to Increase Access and Equity in Environmental Conservation in Isolated Areas (Study in Sukabumi Regency)," *Jurnal Pengabdian West Science* 2, no. 6 (2023): 468–476, <https://doi.org/10.58812/jpws.v2i6.452>.

<sup>25</sup>OT Hidayat, "Digital Citizen Participation in the Pancasila Democracy Process," *Anthropocene: Journal of Social Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2023): 145–154, <https://doi.org/10.33830/antroposen.v2i2.5577>.

<sup>26</sup>GW Giwangkancana, DZ Aulia, and EG Zamel, "The Role of Digital Media in the Social Transformation of Transitional Communities in Pangandaran, West Java," *Journal Social Society* 3, no. 2 (2023): 68–79, <https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.3.2.2023.332>.



arena and an instrument of fragmentation, depending on how digital literacy, public policy, and cultural awareness are integrated.

Digital literacy is a key pillar in shaping a civilized and humane society in the digital realm. This literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also an understanding of human values such as empathy, tolerance, honesty, and responsibility, as well as critical thinking skills to respond to information ethically. Furthermore, digital media has strategic potential as a tool to strengthen cross-cultural interactions, promote inclusivity, and reduce cultural gaps. Optimizing this function requires strengthening digital infrastructure, regulations that support inclusive content, increasing digital cultural literacy, and collaboration between the media industry, local communities, and educational institutions. An integrated approach between government policy, educational innovation, and the social responsibility of the media industry will create an inclusive, harmonious digital ecosystem that promotes cultural diversity in a fair and representative manner.

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