

Editorial Introduction: Contemporary Issues on Advocacy and Legal Services

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Abstract

This editorial outlines key themes in the *Indonesian Journal of Advocacy and Legal Services* issue on “*Contemporary Issues on Advocacy and Legal Services*.” The articles examine diverse topics including restorative justice, labor regulation, digital legal counseling, and post-conflict advocacy. Case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, and New Zealand provide comparative insights into evolving legal practices. The issue highlights ongoing challenges such as unequal access to justice, weak legal ethics enforcement, and the impact of legal pluralism. Emphasizing interdisciplinary and practical approaches, this edition contributes to advancing advocacy as a tool for legal empowerment, institutional reform, and social justice in Indonesia.

Keywords

Advocacy, Legal Services, Justice, Human Rights, Social Justice

The field of advocacy and legal services is undergoing profound transformation across the globe, and Indonesia is no exception.¹

In recent years, socio-legal scholars and practitioners alike have observed an increasingly complex legal landscape, shaped by evolving public demands, shifting political contexts, technological disruptions, and transnational legal influences.² These dynamics invite renewed scholarly attention to the roles, responsibilities, and realities of legal advocates, particularly in jurisdictions marked by legal pluralism, democratic transition, and socio-economic disparities.³

This edition of the *Indonesian Journal of Advocacy and Legal Services* addresses the theme “Contemporary Issues on Advocacy and Legal Services”, aiming to foster critical discourse on the challenges and innovations shaping the legal profession today. The articles featured in this issue explore a diverse array of topics, ranging from access to justice and professional ethics, to the integration of technology in legal practice and the implications of international legal norms on domestic advocacy.

A central issue that continues to surface is the question of access to legal services, especially for the poor and marginalized. Despite the constitutional guarantee of legal aid under Law No. 16 of 2011, implementation gaps remain persistent.⁴ As Daniel S. Lev (2017) once critically observed, the legal system in Indonesia historically functioned not as a means of empowerment but as an instrument of bureaucratic control. This legacy still casts a shadow over efforts to democratize legal access.⁵ Contemporary scholars such as Adriaan Bedner (2013) and Tim Lindsey (2018) have pointed out that while legal reforms have

¹ Lev, Daniel S. "Origins of the Indonesian Advocacy." *Indonesia* 21 (1976): 135-169.

² Arifin, Ridwan. "Legal Services and Advocacy in the Industrial Revolution 4.0: Challenges and Problems in Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Advocacy and Legal Services* 1, no. 2 (2020): 159-162.

³ See Whalen-Bridge, Helena, ed. *The Role of Lawyers in Access to Justice: Asian and Comparative Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press, 2022; Hamdan, Mahani, et al., eds. *Global Trends in Governance and Policy Paradigms*. IGI Global, 2024.

⁴ Wulandari, Cahya, Sonny Saptioajie Wicaksono, and Umi Faridatul Khikmah. "Paralegal Existence in Providing Access to Justice for the Poor in Central Java." *Indonesian Journal of Criminal Law Studies* 4, no. 2 (2019): 199-206.

⁵ Lev, Daniel S. "Colonial law and the genesis of the Indonesian state." *Law and Society in East Asia*. Routledge, 2017, pp. 3-20.

proliferated post-*Reformasi*, enforcement remains inconsistent and elite-driven, further limiting the transformative potential of advocacy.⁶

Among the featured contributions, Santoso et al. examine *Restorative Justice as a Resolution Mechanism for Petty Theft*, providing a comparative legal review between New Zealand and Malaysia. Their findings highlight how restorative justice, when effectively institutionalized, can reduce recidivism and alleviate systemic burdens on the formal justice system—an insight that is highly relevant for Indonesia's ongoing discourse on alternatives to punitive justice models. Their work illustrates the need for Indonesian advocacy to embrace culturally appropriate and community-based solutions, in line with the progressive legal philosophies advocated by Satjipto Rahardjo.

In another contribution, Mursidah et al. in *Advocating for Sustainable Work* offer a legal perspective on labor regulation within Indonesian higher education institutions, bringing attention to the tension between contractual labor models and the academic community's well-being. This research situates labor advocacy within the broader framework of human resource management, academic freedom, and the future of decent work—resonating with ILO's Decent Work Agenda and prompting reflection on the advocate's role in shaping institutional labor policies.

The issue also addresses advocacy in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts, as presented in Ahmad et al.'s article *From Tragedy to Reconciliation*. Their interdisciplinary approach highlights how legal strategies, advocacy, and even educational actors such as history teachers, contribute to embedding peace education in areas once torn by violence. This article bridges law and education, proposing that legal advocates must partner with educators, civil society, and communities to create sustained reconciliation efforts grounded in justice and collective memory.

In line with the broader conversation on digital transformation, this issue includes a conceptual study on responsive legal counseling through digital platforms. The authors discuss the design and function

⁶ Bedner, Adriaan. "Indonesian legal scholarship and jurisprudence as an obstacle for transplanting legal institutions." *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 5, no. 2 (2013): 253-273; Lindsey, Tim, and Simon Butt. *Indonesian law*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

of web applications as tools for increasing legal awareness and broadening outreach. This is particularly significant in Indonesia, where digital legal literacy remains uneven and where technology—when guided by responsive legal theory—can serve as a mechanism of empowerment rather than exclusion.

Further reflections in this issue revisit the commercialization of legal practice and its consequences for ethical advocacy. Large firms in urban centers continue to benefit from lucrative corporate litigation, while rural communities remain underserved. The articles in this edition collectively call for a rebalancing of legal resources, potentially through public-private legal aid partnerships, pro bono obligations, or incentives for service in remote areas.

Another recurring theme is legal pluralism—Indonesia's coexistence of state, religious, and customary legal systems. Several contributions raise critical questions about the advocate's role in navigating these overlapping frameworks while upholding principles of constitutional rights and procedural justice. In contexts where Sharia, adat, and national law intersect, advocates must act not only as legal technicians but also as cultural intermediaries and defenders of human dignity.

Lastly, the edition reiterates the importance of legal education reform. The transformation of advocacy requires transformation at its root: the law school. The integration of clinical legal education, social justice pedagogy, and interdisciplinary collaboration is indispensable for preparing future lawyers to meet the complexities of modern legal practice. This aligns with the vision of legal education as a tool of empowerment, not merely professional accreditation.⁷

In publishing this thematic issue, we aim to contribute to a robust and reflective conversation on the future of advocacy in Indonesia and

⁷ For further insight related to advocacy in Indonesia, see also Latifiani, Dian, Ubaidillah Kamal, Rini Fidiyani, Mutmainah Nur Qoiri, and Didik Purnomo. "Ecofeminism Amid Crisis: Centering Women in Indonesia's Climate Justice Movement". *Indonesian Climate Justice Review* 1, no. 4 (2024); Fischer, Clara, Syahrul Hakim, and Dewi Arum Lestari. "Judges as Agents of Change: The Role of the Judiciary in Protecting Vulnerable Groups". *Indonesian Court and Justice Review* 1, no. 2 (2024); Amrullah, Said, Souad Ezzerouali, and Miftahuddin Ahmad. "Iron Shadows Behind the Smile of Power: Torture Under the New Order Indonesia." *Indonesia Discourse* 1, no. 1 (2024).

the region. We thank the contributing authors for their insightful work, and we hope that the dialogues initiated here will extend beyond the pages of this journal—into classrooms, courtrooms, legislative chambers, and communities in need of legal voice and protection.

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