Digital Trade Justice Training: Building Cross-Sectoral Understanding and Action in South East Asia
May 5-7 2025, Bogor - Indonesia

Concept Note
The global digital economy is increasingly governed by a set of trade rules that prioritize the interests of Big Tech and Global North economies over the rights and needs of workers and communities in the developing world. Digital trade provisions embedded in free trade agreements (both bilateral and regional) and negotiations at the World Trade Organization promote unrestricted data flows, prohibit data localization, restrict source code access, and limit the ability of a country to regulate digital technologies in the public interest. These rules lock in corporate control over data and digital infrastructure, while undermining national sovereignty, workers' rights, and democratic governance.

Several countries in South-East Asia are actively engaged in free trade negotiations that include binding digital trade chapters—such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), and bilateral agreements with the EU and other developed economies. These negotiations often happen behind closed doors with minimal transparency or public scrutiny. The resulting digital provisions risk further restricting national policy space and deepening digital dependency, with little regard for local development needs, worker protections, or democratic oversight. From the marginalization of informal workers by platform monopolies to the erosion of policy space for public digital innovation, the digital trade regime is exacerbating existing inequalities. Yet these issues remain obscure and technical, often excluding civil society and trade unions from meaningful participation.

Purpose of the Workshop
This session aims to build the capacity of civil society organisations and trade unions in South-East Asia to critically engage with digital trade rules. By unpacking how these rules are crafted and who they benefit, we seek to deepen collective understanding and develop a shared political economy analysis of this issue. The goal is to foster resistance strategies that centre worker rights, economic justice, and digital sovereignty.
The session will feature a mix of inputs from regional and global experts, interactive discussions, and strategy workshops. We will analyse current digital trade negotiations, explore case studies from the region, and identify pathways for resistance, advocacy and organising.

Expected Outcomes
By the end of the session, participants will:
- Gain insight into how digitalisation should be understood, how digital trade rules are constructed and what the power dynamics are behind them;
- Identify the impacts of current digital trade frameworks on livelihoods, labour rights, and democratic governance in the region;
- Build cross-sectoral alliances between civil society groups, trade unions, and digital rights advocates;
- Develop strategies to resist unjust digital trade rules and promote equitable alternatives;
- Strengthen regional voices and campaigns demanding fairer and inclusive digital economies.

Program Agenda

DIGITAL TRADE JUSTICE: BUILDING CROSS-SECTORAL UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA	
Day 1 **Monday, 5th May** **Understanding Digitalisation, Digital Economy and Trade**	
9:00 - 9:40	Welcome and Round of Introductions
9:40 - 11:10	Session 1: Understanding Digitalisation
11:10 - 11:25	Coffee Break
11:25 - 12:55	Session 2: Digital Industrialisation
12:55 - 14:25	Lunch Break
14:25 - 15:55	Session 3: Key Provisions in Digital Trade Agreements
15:55 - 16:10	Coffee Break
16:10 - 18: 20	Session 4: Trade Context and Digital Trade Evolution
Day 2 **Tuesday, 6th May** **Digital Trade Rules and Regional Negotiations**	
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and Recap Session
9:15 - 10:45	Session 5: Digital Trade Negotiations in Asia-Pacific
10:45 - 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 - 12:30	Session 6: Sectoral Perspectives in Digital Trade
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 15:30	Session 7: Digital Trade in Our Work
15:30 - 15:45	Coffee Break
15:45 - 17:15	Session 7: Digital Trade in Our Work (contd.)
Day 3 **Wednesday, 7th May** **Solutions, Alternatives and Cross-Sectoral Integration**	
9:00 - 9:20	Welcome and Recap Session
9:20 - 10:50	Session 8: Developing Solutions and Alternatives
10:50 - 11:05	Coffee Break
11:05 - 12:35	Session 9: Synthesis and Integration Plenary
12:35 - 13:00	Closing Session