

To work, globalisation needs to be localised.

The G20 gathered on the heels of the G8, many pledges were made but last year's promises have yet to be kept. There was no agreement on the way out of the economic slowdown in the West, the East bashing on regardless with confident domestic economies. The WTO has stalled and Copenhagen left the collective issue of global warming in tatters.

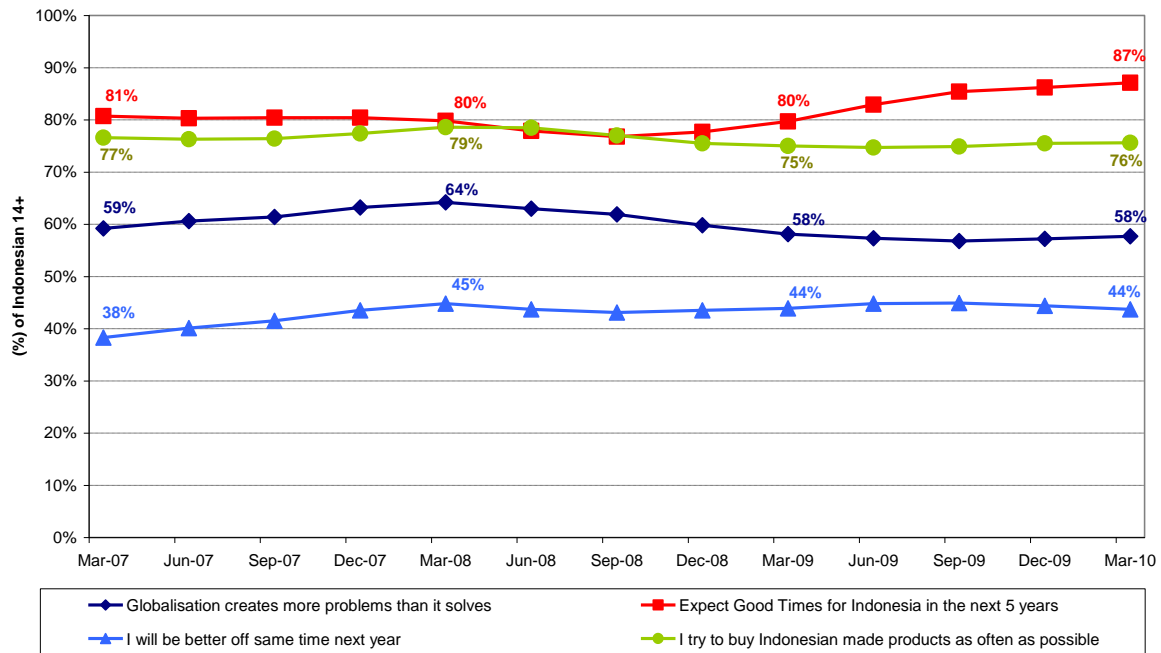
We live in a borderless world. The internet lets the imagination roam the globe, cheap tickets are making it physically possible for more and more people to experience planet Earth. Oil and currencies flow seamlessly, affecting our lives almost instantly in different corners of the globe. Whether we like it or not, our fortunes are increasingly intertwined. Yet, the word 'globalisation' is met with a great deal of scepticism by locals the world over. Here in Indonesia, six out of ten citizens believe "globalisation creates more problems than it solves". Remarkably, that national average varies little by age or gender, urban or rural. The only visible difference is among lower and upper income groups, with affluents more warm and the underprivileged more insecure. Over time, the ups and downs in opinion are influenced by occasional news, good and bad, but the average in the last three years has seen about 60 per cent giving the concept a thumbs-down.

The problem, I dare say, is not with the idea but with the execution of it. Though most politicians are good talkers, very few are good salesmen. The politician who is both talker and salesman as well as an inspiring team leader, is rare indeed. You can count them on your finger tips, on the world stage and at a national level. Globalisation is a big idea, but it needs to be localised. That's the only way world leaders and local heads of state will ever get the concept embraced by overwhelming majorities, not just reducing resistance. Signing bilateral Free Trade Agreements without building community consensus is not the only way forward. The issues faced by each community, farmers, craftsmen and entrepreneurs alike, need to be understood and addressed. Then, the solutions need to be communicated effectively, by the leaders of each group, both locally and globally.

Honesty and empathy lie at the core of any international agreement. When word spreads via the evening news that the same farmers from France and the United States who want all the barriers down are in fact addicted to enormous subsidies, the game goes sour. Everybody at an international gathering is left with no option but to pick up the pieces and go home. If the universal conversation is to begin afresh, Indonesia has a major voice.

Metaphorically speaking, the land is fertile. As at March 2010, 87 per cent of the population expected "Good times for Indonesia in the next five years". That's just about everybody except the diehard sceptics. No wonder Consumer Confidence has been running high. Even if much of that confidence is built on hope, and despite the fact that only 44 per cent feel "I will be better off same time next year", the environment is positive and upbeat. The noticeable differences in opinion are influenced by wealth, the better-off more positive than the weaker sections of society, the young more gung-ho than the old. By working with these differences, private enterprise thrives. There may well be a lesson or two that politicians and bureaucrats may learn from some of the big names in global business who successfully find common ground across boundaries. The challenges may be different, but the people are the same.

“LOCAL GOOD, GLOBAL BAD”



In the context of globalisation, perhaps the best example of successful communications is HSBC’s worldwide advertising campaign. Built on “The World’s Local Bank” as a global platform, the execution of each advertisement is as local as anybody could want them to be. The promise of each product is equally local, working both logic and emotion in local parlance. The basic premise embraces the need to address each local customer’s need locally, not to suit the needs of a global bank, globally. If each leader went to a global conference having listened to the concerns and needs of their people, the chances of finding equitable solutions would improve dramatically. Trying to pull the wool over each other’s eyes, twisting each other’s arms is not going to get a global idea anywhere in this day and age. The farmers from the worlds of SBY, Lula and Manmohan are voters too. If they face extinction, they need to be equipped to put up a fair fight against subsidised competition elsewhere.

The world over, the urge to help friends and neighbours is instinctive. Even today, the human race is fundamentally tribal. In Indonesia, a steady 76 per cent of the population “try to buy Indonesian made products as often as possible”. That urge needs to be fostered by both politicians and business alike. Only the best, most competitive products and services should find patronage, despite that instinct. Only then will consumers win and producers deserve their fortunes, everywhere. Only then will a flat borderless planet be a level playing field for all.

The opinions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, the country’s largest syndicated consumer survey with over 25,000 respondents annually. Interviews are conducted face-to-face each week, continuously, with results released every quarter. The findings are projected to reflect over 85% of the population, 14 years of age and older.

Roy Morgan

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