

The Pandemic of Surveillance

What do we know about digital contact tracing efforts in Southeast Asia?

Countries	Products	Details
Indonesia	PeduliLindungi	The source code is not released.
Malaysia	Gerak Malaysia, MySejantera, MyTrace	The source code of MyTrace, a contact tracing app is not released. The government said they plan to release it since April. Also, little is known about the others.
Philippines	StaySafe.ph	The source code is not released. The app is paired with the COVID-KAYA system. The information is not known either.
Singapore	TraceTogether, SafeEntry, TraceTogether Token	The reference implementation is released for TraceTogether but is not updated along with the app. Limited information on the system of SafeEntry and TraceTogether Token.
Thailand	Mor Chana, Thai Chana	The said “source code” is released or Mor Chana. Little is known about Thai Chana.
Vietnam	Bluezone	The source code and white paper is released but is not updated along with the app.

REGIONAL TRENDS:

OVERALL

- Hastily rushed out without being properly tested and lack of human rights assessment, particularly Privacy Impact Assessment (PII).
- A chain reaction – you have it, I want it too.
- Low adoption of the app leads to more products being introduced in order to include more people.
- Privacy policy is (intentionally?) forgotten.
- Transparency is undermined in many areas
 - Not transparent in the first place.
 - Seems to be transparent at the beginning but later not transparent as the app is updated.

REGIONAL TRENDS:

POORLY REGULATED

- No robust personal data regulation equivalent to the global best practices exists anywhere in SEA for both national and regional.
- There is a need for specific regulation for digital contact tracing efforts and a body that oversees it.
- No guarantee if something (not too) unexpected happens (data breach, data being mishandled, no regulation to protect data that goes offshore)

REGIONAL TRENDS:

SOME ARE
MORE
VULNERABLE
THAN OTHERS

- TraceTogether is mandatory for foreign migrant workers in Singapore.
- TraceTogether Tokens are designed for those who might not have phones applicable with the app – children and elderly people.
- The check-in system in places that are sensitive – gay bar, casino, and specialized clinics.

SOME TECHNICAL CONCERNS FOUND IN THE APPS

- Sometimes, the designs of the app protect users from other users and from cyber criminals but it's different in terms of those who run the server and the central government.
- Vietnam's app, Bluezone uses fixed ID – a social graph or proximity graph can be built from it.
- Temporary ID does not make it safe either – depends on where the encryption key is kept.
- Personal data is requested but cannot verify what it is used for.
- If the data is stored in the foreign servers like Google's and Amazon Web Service (AWS)'s cloud – need to protect data that goes offshore (e.g. The 2018 Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be transparent in the system. Release a white paper and the source code of the system (software + cloud component) under an open source license.
- As the app is updated, the white paper and the source code has to be updated too so that it can be examined independently.
- Look at the possibilities to update the app's functions to protect privacy of people. Learn from the best practices.
- Regulate the use of the apps and other digital contact tracing efforts regarding what type of data is allowed to collect, how the data collected is proceeded and stored. Also, how data must be deleted after a certain period of time.
- Conduct human rights assessment/Privacy Impact Assessment (PII) in which include minorities that are more vulnerable and the result must be made public.