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Locally-led Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in Asia

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Background and Significance

This research pays particular attention to the importance of local contexts in which humanitarian and disaster responses take place. Today, many in the humanitarian and disaster-response policy communities advocate the "localization" of response and recovery efforts, whereby local actors retain leadership of, or involvement in, such efforts, instead of deferring leadership to external (i.e., national or international) entities, or not being involved in the decision-making process in such efforts and simply being passive "victims". However, both the humanitarian and disaster-response policy communities intuitively only *assume* that localization should work better than internationalization and centralization, basing their assumptions on fragmented in-field experience, and on varied interpretations of what "localization" actually means, rather than on academic evidence. This lack of academic evidence represents both a knowledge gap and an opportunity to fill it with research-based findings. It is, therefore, imperative to conduct systematic research on why, how, and when locally-led humanitarian and disaster responses work better (or not) than internationally or centrally-led responses.

To do so, this research project establishes an analytical framework centering on "local knowledge". Asia has rich local knowledge on how to respond to disasters developed over thousands of years of experience. Local knowledge is never static, but has been evolved, contested and negotiated in particular communities over time. Claiming that it is critically important to recognize local knowledge as the existing local capacity to respond to disasters today, this research offers an analytical framework to identify and assess the local knowledge on disaster responses, which consists of four manifestations of local knowledge, social capital, local contexts, adaptations, and local customs, traditions and cultures. The analytical framework is then used by academic researchers to examine the question above, and by practitioners to identify the gap in local capacity in responding to disasters and build up capacities based on that identification.

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The significance of this research lies in three points. First, it fills the knowledge gap in the policy discourse on the localization of DMHA by establishing empirical evidence of how local knowledge saves lives and mitigates disasters. This empirical evidence is offered in an interdisciplinary manner. This project has brought together specialists in international relations, anthropology, development studies, history, gender studies, conflict management, marine biology, engineering and information technology, and all of the specialists have approached the same questions of what local knowledge is; why local knowledge matters; and how local knowledge saves lives and mitigates disasters.

Second, it offers an analytical framework rather than teaching practitioners what localization means. One of the key aims of the analytical framework is to enable practitioners to explore their own locality, using the analytical framework. Many disaster-prone Asian societies have developed locally-led approaches to disaster for centuries, but in the process of modernization, and as a result of other historical processes, such locally-led approaches are often neglected and forgotten. The analytical framework this research offers helps disaster management practitioners to re-examine their own locality and recognize their existing locally-led capacity for disaster management. In order to identify capacity gaps, the identification of existing local capacity, fully taking into consideration the abovementioned historically-developed approaches, is key. The analytical framework helps practitioners to do that.

Third, the analytical framework focuses on non-organizational actors, and thereby enables academics and practitioners to pay attention to the key roles of the actors that matter to the local people. Many localization studies often pay attention to the role of institutions such as local governments and NGOs, while scant attention has been paid to the roles of local groups and individuals who are less visible (temples, schools, businesses, community groups, ethnic groups, concerned citizen volunteers, diaspora etc.). This project pays attention to both organizational and non-organizational actors, identifies relevant local knowledge and develops their capacity.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this project are to:

- 1. Conduct systematic research on the ways in which locally-led disaster management and humanitarian assistance saves lives and mitigates disasters;
- 2. Develop training materials with the aim of building capacity among disaster management practitioners and other training participants (including students);
- 3. Co-create knowledge with practitioners by using online training opportunities; and
- 4. Offer policy recommendations for the disaster risk management community.

Actual Activities

In relation to the four objectives above, the research team conducted the following activities:

1) Systematic research on the ways in which locally-led disaster management and humanitarian assistance saves lives and mitigate disasters

The project members discussed the analytical framework that captures a wide range of locally-led actions underpinned by evolving traditions, cultures and practices. We came to the conclusion that "local knowledge" is the central concept around which various practices and interpretations can take

place. We then established an analytical framework that allowed us to examine it in an empirical manner – doing so is essential when thinking about the practical application of this research. The analytical framework of local knowledge consisting of four manifestations was established through a project members' workshops and through online training opportunities. At the time of writing this report, some of the project members are working on writing an academic paper to be submitted to an international journal as a special issue. The following are the activities that we conducted to establish the analytical framework:

May 2020

Workshop 1: Project members discussed the project objectives and the directions of case studies. We came to the view that among many frames it is particularly important to pay attention to responses based on historical processes when analyzing locally-led disaster responses.

September 2020

Workshop 2: Interviews were conducted with each of the project members as an alternative to the second workshop and the selection of case studies was finalized.

From January 2021 to March 2022

Periodic reviews and discussions about research findings, planning of research output, and research management (by Hirono, Nurdin and Resuello) (19 times in total). Collaborating with the project leader developed the capacity of early career researchers.

February 2021

Workshop 3: Based on the interview with each member, most project members gathered to overview the project and discuss the directions of each case study and the future timeline.

February to May 2021

Discussion with practitioners: Hirono, Nurdin and Resuello reached out to key stakeholders to share the project's approach to locally-led disaster responses, and discuss needs amongst the NGO community. One of the stakeholders, Asia Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN), showed an interest in the project and became the project collaborator at the training events in late 2021 and early 2022.

June 2021

Workshops 4 and 5: Each member presented a summary of their case studies and discussed it with other members. We also discussed further to clarify the analytical framework of the project.

July 2021

Future Cluster Workshop: Some members discussed how the current research project can develop further into the future after its completion.

October 2021

Seminar: Hirono, Nurdin and Tanyag, "Local Knowledge as the Basis of Disaster Management in Asia", Joint Seminar between the Australian National University Japan Institute and the College of

Global Liberal Arts at Ritsumeikan University. See https://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/capevents/2021-10-20/local-knowledge-basis-disaster-management-asia.

January 2022

Workshop 6: Authors' Workshop for a Journal Special Issue. Each author presented a summary of their paper.

February 2022

Symposium: Gupta, Hirono, Marutschke, Nurdin, Okubo, Resuello, and Tanyag, "Local Knowledge as the Basis of Disaster Management in Asia", AJI Symposium "Asia-Japan Research Beyond Borders: Global Sharing of Local Wisdom Towards Human Longevity", Session 1. See http://www.ritsumei. ac.jp/file.jsp?id=523340.

A proposal for a special issue to an international journal was accepted. The draft of each paper is to be submitted by mid-2023.

A draft collection of case studies, aimed at NGO stakeholders and other practitioners, was written. The collection is to be finalized within AY2023.

2) Training materials development with the aim of building capacity among disaster management practitioners and other training participants (including students)

The research team discussed how the activities and outputs above (No. 1) can be "translated" into the practitioners' context. In addition to the activities listed above, we conducted the following to develop training materials for the NGO community in Asia.

February 2021 to March 2022

Project members wrote an introduction and described 12 case studies.

July-August, November 2021, and February 2021

Resuello led the development of materials for online training and the project webpage.

Hirono, Nurdin and Resuello discussed with the project collaborator (Gupta) about further enhancement of the training contents.

3) Knowledge co-creation with practitioners by using online training opportunities

By using the research conducted above (No. 1), we conducted online training for local NGOs who received invitations to the training session. This online training was not just to offer academic knowledge to the NGO community in one direction. It was aimed to co-create knowledge production about how locally-led approaches, embedded in local cultures, histories and traditions, save lives and reduce disaster risks. Given the large number of personnel who wanted to participate in the training, we delivered training sessions in two batches. Each batch consists of three modules:

Module 1: Understanding the problems of the localization policy and the DMHA analytical framework

Module 2: Learning from case studies of locally-led DMHA action

Module 3: Exploring your own locality using the analytical framework and devising an action plan

Modules 1 & 2 show the results of our academic research activities in this project. These modules consist of case studies, each of which describes locally-led DMHA practices, analyses impacts and challenges, and shows how to use the analytical framework to identify such practices. Module 3 offers an opportunity for local NGO officers to develop their action plans to implement their learning in their own context.

In addition to the online training to the NGO community, the project also offered training opportunities for early career researchers and university students who are interested in disaster responses.

June 2021

Workshop: Early Career Researchers Careers Workshop as a career path workshop, in which more than 50 young researchers attended from within and outside the university. Hirono led the event and invited Abel Polese as a guest speaker.

September 2021

Locally-led Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in Asia, Online Workshop for Students, in collaboration with ADRRN.

October 2021 (three sessions)

Locally-led, Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in Asia, 1st Batch of Online Course. Six students of the College of Global Liberal Arts served as notetakers during the participant's discussions at the October training session, with an aim to facilitate discussion and to help students gain opportunities to work with practitioners.

February-March 2022 (three sessions, including the AJI annual symposium being module 2)

Locally-led Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance in Asia, 2nd Batch of Online Course.

4) Presentations of policy recommendations for the disaster risk management community.

The project made a critique of the current international policies of localization, and made some policy recommendations to address the problem of the current policies.

February 2022

Hirono discussed locally-led approaches to disaster responses and discussed policy recommendations at the Association of Pacific Rim Universities seminar series.

April 2022

Hirono delivered a talk at the "2022 Asia Pacific Science and Technology Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction" as part of the mid-term review of Sendai Framework, held by the Philippine government and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Result and Perspectives

The overall concept of the research result is shown in Figure 1. The project began by critiquing the international policies of localization (number 1 in Figure 1). While the international policy frameworks such as the Sendai Framework and Grand Bargain discuss the importance of localization, the policy was established without much academic evidence, and the understanding is fragmented. Further, the policy pays little attention to the importance of non-organizational local actors who are intricately related to cultures, histories and traditions. Upon the identification of these problems, the project moved to the second part of the project: filling the policy gap.

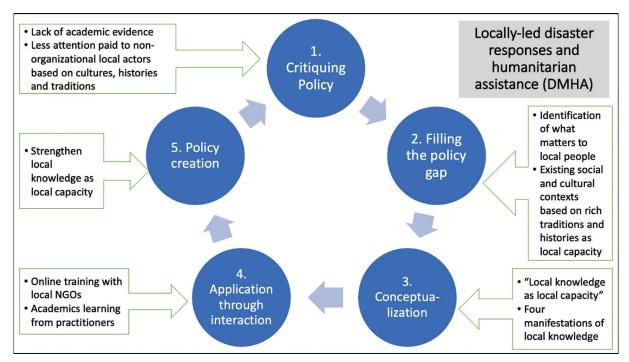


Figure 1. The cycle of the "locally-led disaster responses and humanitarian assistance in Asia" project Source: Created by the Author

1) Conduct systematic research on the ways in which locally-led disaster management and humanitarian assistance saves lives and mitigate disasters

To fill the policy gap, it is important to identify as local capacity the existing social and cultural contexts and relationships based on rich traditions and history. We recognized our research project began from the consensus that finding out such contexts and relationships is the key to identifying the knowledge, skills and capabilities for responding to disasters that have been developed over centuries. We call it "local knowledge".

Local knowledge needs to be conceptualized in an academically robust way and leads one to translate it so that the concept can be applied in practice (number 3). What is local knowledge? We do not assume that local knowledge is static. Some people say that local knowledge is "indigenous", "traditional", "ancient", or "exotic" knowledge. In other words, local knowledge is something unmodern instead of modern. Contrary to that opinion, we argue that local knowledge is an evolving process of tradition and modernity. In the daily life of Asians, these two terms are not in binary positions but are complementary. Local knowledge is a dynamic concept. It changes as time passes, and context evolves. This understanding resonates with Antweiler's (1998) definition of local

knowledge. He defines local knowledge as "consist[ing] of factual knowledge, skills, and capabilities, most of which have some empirical grounding. It is culturally situated and is best understood as a 'social product'".

Local knowledge can be identified and observed empirically. The research team offers four manifestations of local knowledge and uses them as the analytical framework to identify the existing local capacity. Those four manifestations are 1) social capital, 2) contextual historical memories, 3) methods of adaptation through dialogue, and 4) evolving customs, practices, and beliefs.

2) Developed training materials with the aim of building capacity among disaster management practitioners and other training participants (including students)

The training materials aim to equip course participants with an academically-evidenced analytical framework, enabling them to recognize their (often neglected) existing, locally-led approaches to disaster management and humanitarian action, to identify gaps in their capacity, and to devise plans to build such capacity which might be currently lacking.

3) Co-created knowledge with practitioners by using online training opportunities

Co-creation of knowledge involved translating the manifestations of local knowledge into realworld questions, so that practitioners could in fact re-evaluate their locality and identify local knowledge as local capacity. The "translation" into real-world questions is really important when CSOs and science communities work together.

Questions 1		Questions 2	Questions 3
	MANIFESTATIONS	IMPACT INDICATORS	ACTIONS
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	Does your local community/ organization	How can this local knowledge contribute to your desired change?	To utilize local knowledge as local capacity in DMHA, what are the actions to be undertaken?
1. Social Capital	 form trust with local/affected people facilitate bonding within local/affected people play a bridging and linking role between outsiders and the community have local/affected people participate in decision-making and implementation of DMHA projects/assistance 	 Affected communities have new and/or strengthened social networks within and outside their circles Planning of disaster responses incorporates how to utilize social networks Local/affected people fully participate in decision- making and implementation of DMHA initiatives 	

Table 1. Action Plan for Locally-led Disaster Responses

Questions 1		Questions 2	Questions 3
MANIFESTATIONS		IMPACT INDICATORS	ACTIONS
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	Does your local community/ organization	How can this local knowledge contribute to your desired change?	To utilize local knowledge as local capacity in DMHA, what are the actions to be undertaken?
2. Contextual historical memories	 understand sociocultural and environmental contexts understand local contexts and social networks amongst residents (e.g., ethnic divide; social hierarchy; prejudice) understand other local contexts that matter in disaster responses 	 ✓ My disaster response does not ignore but addresses the sociocultural and environmental contexts. 	
3. Methods of adaptation through dialogue -	 □ interact with different local communities □ work with external stakeholders (e.g., donors, international organizations, government and other NGOs) □ know how the local community tends to assimilate to others, resist against outside values, beliefs and knowledge, and/or by creating something new (e.g., new identity, new practice) □ identify the pattern of engagement and incorporate it in the planning of disaster responses 	 My disaster response recognizes the historical pattern of engagement with outsiders, and locate the current response within it. Affected communities creates something new as a result of interaction with others. 	
4. Evolving customs, practices, and beliefs	 understand local customs, practices and beliefs (contents and social impacts) consider how customs, practices and beliefs save lives and mitigate disasters incorporate them as part of disaster response plans think about how the needs of the vulnerable groups are addressed while respecting customs, practices and beliefs 	 ✓ Evolving customs, practices and beliefs contributes to making communities better cope with existing and future disasters. ✓ My disaster response addresses the needs of the groups that are regarded as a lower hierarchy in the evolving customs, practices and beliefs. 	

Source: Hirono and Resuello (2022)

4) Offered policy recommendations for the disaster risk management community

The most important policy recommendation deriving from this project is to pay more attention to the importance of social sciences and humanities when considering locally-led approaches. In other words, international policies should recognize local knowledge as local capacity, and capacity development should include restoring and recognizing local knowledge and how local communities can utilize local knowledge in disaster response planning. More specifically, strengthening social capital, taking into account contextual historical memories and methods of adaptation in disaster response planning, and examining the use of evolving customs, practices and beliefs in disaster responses, are actions integral to developing their capacities in disaster responses.

Name	Affiliation	Main Roles
Miwa Hirono (Project leader)	College of Global Liberal Arts	 Overall management of the project Author of a paper entitled "Diaspora as the linchpin of local and international humanitarian actors: A case of Chinese in Aceh in the aftermath of 2004 Earthquake" Expert advisor for online training Speaker at the ANU Japan Institute seminar Speaker at the AJI symposium
Marjorie Resuello (Researcher)	Asia-Japan Research Institute	Overall coordinator of online trainingSpeaker at the AJI symposium
Riza Muhammad Nurdin (Visiting fellow)	Asia-Japan Research Institute	 Overall coordination of the collection of case studies and a special journal issue Author of a paper entitled "Faith-based organizations and social capital in Indonesian post-disaster recovery" Speaker at the ANU Japan Institute seminar Speaker at the AJI symposium
Dowon Kim	College of Science and Engineering	 Expert and knowledge provider for case studies Expert advisor for online training
Yasuko Hassall Kobayashi	College of Global Liberal Arts	 Author of a paper entitled "Local turn in Japan: Safeguarding lives of international migrants in Japan at times of disasters" Expert advisor and moderator for online training
Powell Gian Marquez	College of Global Liberal Arts	• Author of a paper entitled "Ecosystem approach in disaster risk reduction: Mangrove conservation and rehabilitation project in the Philippines"
D. Moritz Marutschke	College of Global Liberal Arts	 Author of a paper entitled "Quantifying social capital in post-disaster Indonesia: An AI-based language model approach" Speaker at the AJI symposium

Project Members and Roles

Name	Affiliation	Main Roles
Takeyuki Okubo	College of Science and Engineering	 Expert and knowledge provider for case studies Expert advisor for online training Speaker at the AJI symposium
Yusuke Toyoda	College of Policy Science	 Expert and knowledge provider for case studies Expert advisor for online training Speaker at the AJI symposium
Lwin Cho Latt	Graduate School of International Relations	Workshop participantKnowledge provider for future cluster workshop
Phaknian Kanjana	Graduate School of Policy Science	• Student participant for case study development
Yang Manzun	Graduate School of Policy Science	• Student participant for case study development
Zhang Xuan	Graduate School of Policy Science	• Student participant for case study development
Maria Tanyag	Australian National University	 Author of a paper entitled "Gender, Knowledge and 'Forgotten Crises' in Southeast Asia" Speaker at the ANU Japan Institute seminar Speaker at the AJI symposium
Caroline Reeves	Harvard University Fairbank center	• Author of a paper entitled "Historical narratives and lessons learned: Plague in early 20 th -century China"

Selected List of Publications

- <u>Hirono, M</u>. 2021. "Impact of China's decision-making processes on international cooperation: cases of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief", in Jones, C., and Mulloy, G. (eds). *East Asia, Peacekeeping Operations, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief*, Routledge, pp. 54-71.
- <u>Hirono, M</u>. 2021. "What has the Belt and Road Initiative Brought Us: The China Problem and the Investment Dilemma", *Keiso Shobo*. (廣野美和編著 (2021)『一帯一路は何をもたらしたのか: 中国問題と投資のジレンマ』勁草書房)
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Selected list of Research Funding/Grant

- DAAD International Virtual Academic Collaboration IVAC, 2021-2022, €50,000: D. Moritz Marutschke.
- Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research "Kakenhi" (C), 2022-2025, ¥3,9m, "Understanding E-Learning Features in Online Courses", Principal Investigator: D. Moritz Marutschke.

(マルチュケ モリツ (代表者), 日本学術振興会・科学研究費 (基盤研究 C)「Understanding E-Learning Features in Online Courses」2022-2025 年度, 3900 千円 (直接経費: 3000 千円, 間 接経費: 900 千円))

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Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research "Kakenhi" (S), 2018-2020, ¥3,38m, "The Basic Data Base of Community Disaster Risk Management Activities on

Preservation Historical Districts", Principal Investigator: Kim Dowon.

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