

Global Resilience Challenge Problem Statement

Disability and Disasters: Empowering people and building resilience to risk



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1. The problem

People with disabilities (PWDs) in South East Asia are highly vulnerable to disasters. However, they remain unseen, unheard and unaccounted for in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) [1]. This affects 650 Million people who have disabilities in South East Asia alone.

The Causes:

- *PWDs are amongst the poorest in society* and are subject to disempowering stigmas, discrimination and marginalization that perpetuate existing cultural norms and beliefs [2];
- *Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk* of violence, physical abuse and sexual exploitation after disasters due to displacement and unsafe shelters and public spaces [3-5];
- *The physical and social isolation of PWDs hampers participation in everyday life* - encouraging passivity and them being seen as *objects of care*, limiting access to education, social networks and risk knowledge [1, 6];
- *There is little empirical evidence on the challenges PWDs face when responding to hazards and disasters* [7];
- The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)** mandates stronger inclusion of PWDs in DRR. Yet pathways to achieving these new targets and their feasibility remain unclear and fragmented due to a lack of disaggregated data on PWD needs, an ongoing disconnect between DRR policies and practices and disability rights-based laws and a lack of robust guidelines on how to mainstream disability-inclusive DRR (DiDRR) [8-12];
- *DRR stakeholders have little knowledge on how to support DiDRR and lack the skills and capacity* needed to mainstream DiDRR and measure DiDRR achievements and there are few platforms to link DRR stakeholders with those who have the skills and knowledge they lack – specifically, Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs) and PWDs themselves [8, 13-16].

Our 10-year vision: Inclusion to be at the center of DRR and disaster responses in SE Asia for the benefit of all.

Inclusion and DiDRR is a human right - disability is not a medical or charity issue [17, 18]. This requires shifts in DRR *strategy* and *practice*. First, PWDs and DPOs must be actively included at all stages of DRR from inception to delivery to ensure that DRR plans and practice are tailored to specific requirements and honor the principles of universal design [12]. DiDRR demands full integration - disability can no longer be an “add on” to existing DRR approaches. Second, it requires the empowerment of PWDs and DPOs. ***Our goal is to strengthen the voices of PWDs in SE Asia (focusing on Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines) and provide them with the institutional and social support needed to respond effectively to hazards and disasters and to be champions of resilience and change.***

Project aims: This project will: (1) *examine the challenges that people with disabilities¹ (PWDs) face in responding to disasters and risk in Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia*, and (2) *identify solutions to mainstream disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction (DiDRR) planning and action*. We will explore the role that contextual and cultural factors play in (i) reinforcing institutional, structural and social barriers to resilience and (ii) develop platforms for empowerment, inclusion and positive transformation.

Our Unique Selling Point: Our goal is to include and ***strengthen the voices of people with disabilities in South East Asia and provide them with the support needed to respond effectively to natural disasters and to be champions of resilience and change in their own communities.*** Our approach is highly inclusive. Our commitment to empower PWDs and strengthen their capacity to respond to natural disasters is demonstrated by our inclusion of Deaf people and DPOs on our team. This is important on three accounts. First, inclusion and capacity building begins from the inception of a project or activity so it is imperative that people with disabilities are part of our team. Second, the inclusion of Deaf team members’ and DPOs harnesses cultural insider knowledge and experiences that non-disabled people cannot truly understand. Third, it provides PWDs with the platform to be champions for others with disabilities and builds further capacity. Our plan for achieving this goal - including our Theory of Change, Impact Pathway and the presentation of our meta-theory (systems theory and resilience) that justifies our chosen change process - is presented in the next section.

¹ PWDs include those who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (as per Article 1 of the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

2. Theory of Change & Impact Pathway

Our overarching 10-year vision: is for **inclusion to be at the centre of disaster responses in SE Asia for the benefit of all**. PWDs are actively included at all stages of DRR from inception to delivery. Their centrality demonstrates the fundamental shift in thinking, strategy and practice that has made DiDRR a reality. Our vision is that disability is recognised as an issue of rights and not charity. As such it shall be fully integrated into existing DRR approaches - it will no longer be seen as an add-on. A key component of this new way of thinking and acting is the empowerment of PWDs and DPOs. This project will empower PWDs and DPOs by strengthening their voices in SE Asia via strong governance mechanisms, improving their access to robust social networks, building PWDs confidence and drive to proactively respond to natural disasters, and supporting them to be strong champions of resilience and change in their own communities.

The three types of change we will achieve in Stage 3: To ground our vision, three types of change are required:

- A. **Knowledge & skills** e.g. engage PWDs, their households and representative organisations as co-producers of risk solutions and share the insights gained in accessible formats; create an empirical knowledge-base on the challenges and needs that PWDs have when responding to risk; train PWD on how to build personal resilience to risk based on solutions identified by them and how to be community champions; and train DRR actors and emergency responders on the needs of PWDs and how best to support them;
- B. **Attitudes & belief systems** e.g. change the way PWDs and their representative organisations perceive their own abilities and support them in being active participants of chance and resilience in their own lives (from passive receivers of charity to empowered champions); and change the way DRR actors and governments perceive and engage with PWDs (moving away from the stigma of being passive objects of charity);
- C. **Inclusive governance** e.g. create trusted and supportive spaces/platforms/mechanisms where PWDs can express their challenges and aspirations and needs; and improve linkages between disaster response actors, DPOs and PWDs to create solid and informed governance structures that can properly support PWDs to build their own resilience.

Impact Pathways: To achieve these changes we will adopt a three-pronged approach that incorporates research, engagement and capacity-building components:

1. **Identify the challenges that PWDs face in responding to natural disasters** in our case study countries. This includes an exploration on how contextual, cultural and institutional conditions in different contexts influence the vulnerability and resilience of PWDs to risk. This will create a knowledge-base on the challenges PWDs face in responding to natural disasters that will be shared with other countries in the region and be used to inform the development and implementation of appropriate resilience-building strategies;
2. **Improve governance processes** by strengthening linkages and understanding between DRR actors, DPOs and PWDs via existing or new networks. This includes identifying the best ways to foster and support cooperation and knowledge-sharing between disaster response actors, DPOs and PWDs.
3. **Work with disabled people and support organisations** (DPOs and DRR organisations) to identify ways of empowering PWDs in the context of risk, creating trusted platforms for them to speak out on their own issues and supporting them to build their own resilience to future hazards and risk. This step includes the co-design of resilience-building solutions that improve inclusivity, promote active participation and empowerment of PWDs in resilience-building strategies.

To better understand the diverse needs that PWDs in SE Asia have and the role context plays in influencing differential vulnerability and resilience levels, we chose to focus on countries that experience different hazards and have different religious contexts, political systems and development levels. The Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia are also at different stages in terms of their development of inclusive risk resilience-building strategies. The Philippines are more advanced than Thailand. Cambodia is in the early stages of developing a DRR strategy, and by working across countries there is a unique opportunity for DRR actors in Cambodia to build inclusivity into the plan early in its formulation. Developing a project that embraces difference provides three advantages. First, this will enable the identification of both commonalities and the contextualised place-specific differences that influence differential patterns of vulnerability and resilience to risk for PWDs. Second, the experiences and activities from the more advanced countries can be used to guide the development and effectiveness of disaster response strategies in Thailand and Cambodia. Finally, this provides us with the information needed to draw broader lessons for inclusive resilience-building that may be transferrable to other communities, countries and contexts.

3. Environmental and Social Safeguards

Environmental and social safeguards lie at the heart of research and action on global environmental change. We do not foresee that our work will have any negative impacts on the physical environment. Our project focuses on the social sphere since natural hazards are the trigger event for destabilising the system in question (a population or community). The population we are concerned with are PWDs, a group regarded as highly vulnerable to hazards and risk. For this reason, our safeguard measures will focus on the social sphere.

Ethical and social safeguards are central to responding to the humanitarian considerations and harmful effects of human actions and determining the fair distribution of responsibility for harm prevention[19]. Our research and resilience-building activities with PWDs may include participants who have experienced trauma from disasters or be subject to ongoing harm associated with risk. To ensure that we do no harm to participants, we will adhere to strict ethical standards set out by the University of Sydney's Research Integrity Office, who ensure that that all research is conducted in accordance with State and National Codes of Practice. These codes of practices include the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research [20, 21]. Specifically, we will:

- a. Respect the truth, rights and cultural sensitivities of our participants;
- b. Secure informed consent from participants and give them the choice of withdrawing consent at any time of the research process;
- c. Ensure that all team members are trained in conducting ethical research that respects people, their privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities and minimises participant risk; and
- d. Take measures to ensure that project outputs are communicated according to the highest academic standards. This includes protecting the identity and privacy of informants where appropriate by using pseudonyms or generalized descriptors in written research outputs.

4. Risk Matrix and mitigation

Risk & probability	Consequence level	Measure to control risk
Project partners are unable to contribute to the activities within the allocated time frame, resulting in delays or non-completion of deliverables. Probability: Low	Medium	Partner sub-contracts will include a ToR of the expected work and timelines for deliverable will be set and agreed upon as will consequences for non-delivery. The Project Lead will monitor progress and maintain regular communication with all partners to ensure deliverables are completed on time. If a partner is unable to finish the allotted task, the Project Lead may renegotiate with other partners to take on additional tasks upon approval from GRP Challenge team
Local, regional and global stakeholders (conflicting priorities, entrenched charity model and passivity, political and economic factors) may reduce the interest, focus and engagement of stakeholders. Probability: Medium	Medium	We will allow for some flexibility in the project design to address emerging issues over the course of the program to ensure that the work will remain relevant. Including key stakeholders on our in-country and strategic advisory committees will also help facilitate ongoing dialogue and engagement as the project progresses to heighten relevance and stakeholder buy-in. Emphasis will also be placed on finding and empowering champions with disabilities in order to facilitate greater ownership and activism of PWD in DiDRR.
Political instability or natural hazards in case study countries may cause delays in data collection and activity implementation. Probability: Medium	Low	The Project Lead will change the locations of planned meetings or case studies if necessary. The in-country partners will discuss realistic timing and contingency plans to deal with possible risks based on their local knowledge and social capital in their country. That might include flexibility in work sites, workshop venues, and making use of electronic communications if necessary.
Money paid by the lead organization to sub-grantee is misused. Probability: Low	High	The University will use a central Financial Management System to track and account for all payments. Sub-contract terms with partners can be written in such a way that payments are made in instalments once milestones are completed to ensure compliance (as per standard legal clauses). The Team Lead will liaise with KPMG to ensure that we are complying with established strategies that ensure transparency and accountability.
Unforeseen changes in the work plan may result in line items specified in the proposal budget to change. Probability: High	Low	Any proposed changes in the budget will be communicated to the GRP and approval will be sought where needed (international travel) before any deviations are made.
Acquiring some supporting financial documents (e.g. receipts) is not realistic in some locations. Probability: High	Low	If receipts are not possible to obtain (normal for small amounts), the amount will be recorded in a notebook or claim-sheet.
Financial management practice in some partner organizations might require the withholding of original documents. Probability: Low	Medium	The project partners will discuss and agree on compliance with KPMG's financial policy and requirements at the start of the project. This will be shared with the Financial Manager in the School of Geosciences at the University of Sydney, who will be responsible for managing the budget in partnership with the Team Lead.
Unequal voice and participation of women and other marginalized sub-groups in the research and engagement activities. Probability: Medium	Medium	Local authorities and disability support organizations will be informed well in advance of the purpose, benefits and requirements for participation. We will ensure that the time, space and location of discussions/interviews are convenient for women and other marginalized groups to participate. We will include PWDs as meaningful participants and co-producers of knowledge and solutions. They offer cultural knowledge, lived experience, technical inputs and social capital in the form of networks with community members, DPOs, and government.
Project findings might be unwelcome by some stakeholders given that project activities may reveal negative aspects of policy and practice and challenge power systems. Probability: Medium	Low	We will develop a sound research and engagement methodology and confer with in-country partners and gatekeepers to navigate localised sensitivities.
Research findings might be challenged by contradictory empirical experiences elsewhere. Probability: Low	Low	We will develop a sound research methodology and triangulate methods and findings to ensure scientific rigour.

5. Measuring Resilience

Monitoring and evaluation

Resilience is both a constant yet dynamic co-existing element of the coupled human-environment (along with vulnerability) and a process that embraces adaptive learning and management. As such, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate how resilience-building processes are unfolding throughout the project's duration to enable informed changes to be made in the approach as the project moves forward. To ensure the ongoing success of this project in building resilience, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan will be implemented. This M&E plan will ensure that change will be simultaneously brought about in the three key areas (increased knowledge and skills; changes in attitudes and beliefs; and strengthened inclusive governance) in each of the in-country projects. This will enable us to make progress in achieving our vision - inclusive DRR for all.

Value for Money

A. Economy (input)

The main input for this project is human capital. Specifically:

1. The collective expertise that our team brings to the project in the areas of theory and methods for vulnerability and adaptation assessment, participatory and action-based qualitative and quantitative research approaches, DRR and emergency management, DiDRR, community outreach, advocacy and social mobilization, professional development and training, cross-cultural stakeholder engagement, inclusive decision-making, policy development, international development and humanitarian relief, and project management on publically funded projects;
2. Knowledge, experience and the required cultural-sensitivity that comes from working in all three of our focal countries and having team members that are a part of the group we are engaging with (PWDs);
3. Established networks and relationships with international, national and local DRR and DiDRR actors, DPOs, disability support and advocacy organisations, and people with disabilities; and
4. Tools needed to build knowledge, capacity and change behaviour e.g. community and DiDRR training skills and materials.

These resources will considerably expand what our team is able to accomplish in advancing DiDRR in SE Asia.

B. Efficiency (output)

The efficiency of our project will be boosted by the effective use of existing tools, capitalising on existing networks and relationships, solid inter-team information sharing and coordination, and a sound risk management strategy:

1. Our team has experience working in each of the countries (Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia) on disability, DRR and DiDRR issues. As such, each team member has developed, tested and applied the types of tools and skills needed to execute this project in an efficient manner. This includes methods, training techniques and materials, engagement approaches and techniques (benefiting engagement with communities and governance processes), and advocacy;
2. Trust and relationships are also extremely important consideration when working with PWDs. PWDs are often distrustful of those outside their support networks, particularly those working for authorities due to a history of discrimination, misunderstandings and prejudices. Trust and networks take a long time to build. We have the advantage of having established networks and relationships that we will use to quickly identify entry points for engagement and streamline the manner in which we work and engage with the population (people with disabilities) that we aim to serve. These relationships will also help us identify potential champions for building resilience and facilitating the fundamental changes needed to advance inclusivity;
3. A project of this nature cannot succeed without a solid team. In the Solutions Statement development phase of Stage 2, we will develop a team strategy that (i) establishes realistic milestones that are doable, (ii) sets out team expectations that have collective buy-in, and (iii) a mode of working that enables effective inter-team communication, information sharing (including the identification of work challenges and solutions throughout the project's duration) and smooth activity coordination;
4. We will also establish a sound risk management strategy that takes into consideration team dynamics, the management of human and financial capital and the overall good governance of the project. The draft of our risk management strategy will be developed further in the Solutions Statement development phase of Stage 2.

C. Effectiveness (outcome/impacts)

DiDRR is a highly inclusive process that requires engagement and cooperation between multiple stakeholders over space and time. As such our project is highly pragmatic and aims to add value to existing DiDRR initiatives and fill outstanding gaps in knowledge and practice. To this end we will build on successful DiDRR initiatives and coordinate (where possible) with ongoing DiDRR projects in the region to promote shared learning and avoid duplication. Working alongside other organisations engaged in DiDRR will also help to maximize long-term impact.

6. References

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