

Disaster Risk Management

Disaster preparedness and risk reduction are essential to the sustained well-being and future development of communities throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



Natural disasters affect tens of thousands of people in the Asia Pacific every year, leaving behind staggering human, physical, and economic losses in their wake. Many of the region's largest population centers are situated in low-lying coastal centers, putting households, businesses, and communities at high risk. Understanding these disaster risks and vulnerabilities can help to reduce their impacts, thereby saving lives, preventing damages, and protecting local economies in the region. Already the most disaster-prone region in the world, the Asia-Pacific is expected to see an increase in the frequency and severity of disaster events due to climate change.

For over 20 years, The Asia Foundation has been helping communities to strengthen their resilience to natural disasters and the increasing threats from climate change. Its current programs engage the private sector, pilot innovation in data sharing, cultivate leadership among local and national governments, and facilitate regional coordination.

MOBILIZING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The Asia Foundation is reaching beyond the traditional targets of disaster risk management work to directly engage with the private sector. In Vietnam,

the Foundation has trained over 2,000 business managers and CEOs representing 900 SMEs (small and medium enterprises) in 16 provinces and 3 cities to reduce climate change related risks to their businesses and communities. SMEs employ almost 90 percent of the population and produce over 50 percent of the national GDP. Their ability to recover after a disaster is essential to revitalizing communities and livelihoods, yet many lack emergency response or disaster management plans of any kind. Since 2011 the Foundation has been addressing this gap with facilitated trainings, enabling businesses to better manage disaster risks, protect their assets and employees, and build community resilience.

At a regional scale, the Foundation is working to highlight the importance of private sector resilience for regional economic development in ASEAN countries. In April 2016, it will co-sponsor the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center's (ADPC) Asian Business Forum, which will convene over 100 participants from the private sector, government, and development organizations. The forum will facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices on the private sector engagement in disaster risk reduction, and develop a regional business forum that institutionalizes collaboration and coordination on DRM efforts.

DISTASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

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INNOVATIONS IN DATA SHARING

In partnership with ChangeFusion, a Bangkok-based civic technology organization, The Asia Foundation is exploring ways to increase the Thai government's capacity to respond to disasters through data sharing. The initiative brings together an emerging community of DRM data partners in Thailand—including entrepreneurs, software developers and reform-minded government officials—to facilitate problem-solving and coordination across agencies, and to pilot simple yet powerful data-sharing technologies. By strategically engaging with influencers and creators in Thai society and government, the project aims to help institute administrative changes that strengthen national and local disaster risk management capacities, helping to protect property and save lives.



CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP

The Asia Foundation works to foster a culture of disaster preparedness and response in China through capacity building programs. Since 2006, it has partnered with governmental and nongovernmental institutions to train communities in efforts to build their resilience. The Foundation's pilot projects have informed the formulation of the Chinese government's national standards for community-based disaster reduction. By the end of 2015, there were more than 5,000 prepared communities, far surpassing the government's goal. Furthering this effort, the Foundation organized an intensive eight-day workshop for over 50 Chinese master trainers from national, provincial, and municipal agencies in 2015, who will then disseminate their knowledge to the community level.

Between 1995 and 2014, the Foundation conducted the longest running disaster risk management training program in the Pacific Islands. The effectiveness and credibility of its trainings is well-known in the region, and has contributed to

the development of thousands of disaster management and response personnel in 14 Pacific Island nations. The Foundation worked with local, national and regional organizations to strengthen leadership on disaster coordination and planning, and empowered key government officials to mainstream disaster and climate risks into national planning and budgeting processes. Its programs also facilitated linkages among disaster risk management organizations in the Pacific region, and provided support for a regional database of trained participants and instructors in the event of a disaster.

REGIONAL NETWORKING

The Asia Foundation facilitates regional networking and exchange on disaster risk management issues. Experienced at dealing with natural disasters at home, Chinese NGOs are now beginning to offer their expertise abroad. The Foundation is supporting these early efforts to build China's capacity in international humanitarian work, fostering networking among key humanitarian actors, improving China's understanding of the role of NGOs in international assistance, and mobilizing private sector support. In the wake of the 2015 earthquake, the Foundation sent technical specialists to Nepal to support Chinese NGOs during their first-ever foreign disaster response. And for sustained impact, the Foundation continues to link these organizations with larger international relief efforts, and build awareness of best practices and international assistance standards.

The Foundation has also convened key stakeholders from ASEAN countries in a regional forum on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. In its second iteration in May 2016, the forum will aim to reflect ASEAN's current vision of "One ASEAN, One Response," whereby all Member States unite as one to respond to disasters within or outside the region. Panel discussions will feature representatives from Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment, national climate change bodies, national disaster management organizations, local governments, non-government actors, private sector, media, and academia. Discussions will focus on government leadership in fostering effective stakeholder engagement in climate resilience; leveraging regional and international frameworks; and promoting shared standards and protocols to improve interoperability between countries.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

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