

Exchanges on the Cascading Human Insecurities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Last September 16, 2021, the “Human Security and Practices of Empowerment in East Asia Project” organized a lunchtime seminar entitled: “More than health insecurity: Cascading human insecurities during the COVID-19 pandemic”. This event was an online exchange, reflecting on how the COVID-19 pandemic transcends health insecurities and cascades to the human insecurities that reinforced the pre-pandemic inequalities that vulnerable groups and communities face daily. Presentations from the research project included the human security issues of poverty, food security, and forced migration during the pandemic in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Japan, respectively. This was complemented with short updates from the JICA country offices in Vietnam and Indonesia on how they thrive with JICA’s development cooperation work despite the current circumstances.

JICA Ogata Research Institute Executive Senior Research Fellow Ms. Ako Muto opened the seminar by introducing the “Human Security and Practices of Empowerment in East Asia Project.” She explained the two levels on which eight human security issues, including health security, food security, gender, economic security, environment, aging society, forced migration, and peace and justice, are explored. The first level of the project provides a general overview of the effects of COVID-19 on specific vulnerable individuals and groups in different countries in East Asia, based mainly on remote research work. The results of this level of analysis are part of the project’s [Working Reports available on the JICA Ogata RI website](#). Currently, the participating researchers are developing Level 2, centering their analyses on how empowerment is realized for and by vulnerable groups and communities.

Dr. Vu Le Thao Chi, Project Assistant Professor at Keio University, presented the economic gaps during this pandemic and their impacts on the urban poor of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She detailed how the lockdown has aggravated the insecurities due to the mobility restriction to conduct work. Charles Darwin University’s Senior Lecturer, Dr. Jonatan Lassa, explained the impacts of COVID-19 on food security among internally (disaster) displaced people with a focus on women and children in Central Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara Province in Indonesia. He

shared the protection strategies by NGOs in temporary/transitional shelters during the outbreak of the COVID-19 in these areas. In addition, Dr. Lisette Robles, Research Fellow at JICA Ogata Research Institute, presented Japan's human insecurity during the overlapping occurrence of disasters and COVID-19. She expounds on how the dual tragedies of infectious diseases and natural hazards reveal intersecting insecurities for displaced communities in Japan. These presentations were followed by brief updates from Ms. Tran Mai Anh from the JICA Indonesia Office and Ms. Erika Inoue from the JICA Vietnam Office on the various effects of the pandemic on the project management and office's operations.

These exchanges were made through the lunchtime seminar enjoined by about 60 participants within the JICA system. Although the seminar could not take place, as usual, the remote event provided the opportunity to include more participants, enjoining about 60 of our JICA colleagues to share perspectives on human security against the backdrop of this global health emergency.

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