

## Human Security Empowerment Project members join 6<sup>th</sup> International Humanitarian Studies Association Conference

The International Humanitarian Studies Association held its 6<sup>th</sup> biannual international conference on November 3-5, 2021. Having been postponed for a year due to the pandemic, the conference was organized and held from Science Po in Paris, welcoming hybrid and remote presentations everywhere. With this year's theme: *"New realities of politics and humanitarianism: between solidarity and abandonment,"* the conference provided a critical forum for discussing the changes within humanitarianism and what these changing political realities mean for the protection and assistance of crisis-affected populations.

Five of the project members from the Human Security and Practices of Empowerment in East Asia research project participated in the panel entitled: *"COVID-19 beyond Health Insecurity: Human security perspective in understanding the multidimensional impacts of the pandemic"*. The panel highlighted how the spread of the novel coronavirus is not only a health crisis but also a human security concern, creating overlapping and cascading complex insecurities that inarguably heightened people's existing vulnerabilities.

Dr. Arisman (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Indonesia) presented his paper on COVID-19's impacts on river plastic pollution in Indonesia. Dr. Jonatan Lassa (Charles Darwin University, Australia) shared his paper on the nexus of food security, human security, and non-traditional security based on the observed COVID-19 situation in Indonesia. Dr. Vu Le Thao Chi's (Keio University, Japan) paper articulated the challenges of poverty in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam during the pandemic to the practice of empowerment in the context of urban areas. Dr. Sachiko Ishikawa (Ritsumeikan University, Japan) wrote a paper on how the COVID-19 pandemic provided a positive paradigm shift for the Mindanao peace process between the Philippine national government and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. And, Dr. Lisette R. Robles (JICA Ogata Research Institute, Japan) presented her paper on the intersecting impact of COVID-19 and the 2020 South Japan Flooding on the residents of Kuma Village in Kumamoto, Japan and how these magnified their longstanding insecurities. These papers are aligned to their respective themes in the current human security project.

Other scholars joined the panel, including Dr. Oscar A. Gómez (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan), a former research fellow at the Institute, who presented his paper on the impact of the pandemic on population movement by looking at migration as a threat, migrants as a population of concern, and migration as a means for security. Likewise, the paper from Dr. Alistair Cook and Mr. Chris Chen (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) on a survey on the new challenges, modalities, and cooperation models in humanitarian action in the Asia Pacific during the COVID-19 pandemic was a welcomed contribution to the panel.

The panel pooled together insightful papers that reflect on the current crisis from the lens of human security to promote a discussion on how the human security's operational framework of combined top-down protection and bottom-up empowerment can be optimized during this pandemic and towards recovery. The feedbacks from Dr. Vu and Dr. Gómez, who also served as the Discussants, and from our other colleagues in the panel contributed to the lively exchange.

This conference was an excellent opportunity to present our research project and show its relevance to the current and evolving trends in humanitarian studies. We look forward to participating in other prestigious and relevant gatherings in the future.

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