

Human Security Empowerment Project Holds Two Authors' Workshops in Spring 2021

The “Human Security and Practices of Empowerment in East Asia Project” held its 2nd and 3rd Authors' Workshops on April 17 and May 22, respectively. These workshops were opportunities to gather all the project members, however virtually, to share the development in the individual case studies and confirm the general direction of the whole research project. These workshops were joined by the project advisors: Prof. Mely Caballero-Anthony of Nanyang Technological University, Prof. Yoichi Mine of Doshisha University, and Prof. Sachiko Ishikawa of Ritsumeikan University; participating researchers: Dr. Arisman from the Center of South-East Asian Studies (Indonesia), Dr. Vu Le Thao Chi of Keio University (Japan), Dr. Jonatan Lassa of Charles Darwin University (Australia), Dr. Surangrut Jumnianpol of Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), Dr. Lourdes Rallonza of Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines), and Dr. Maria Tanyag of Australian National University (Australia); and the project team members: Ms. Ako Muto, Dr. Lisette Robles, Mr. Kaito Takeuchi, and Ms. Chihiro Toya from JICA Ogata Research Institute.

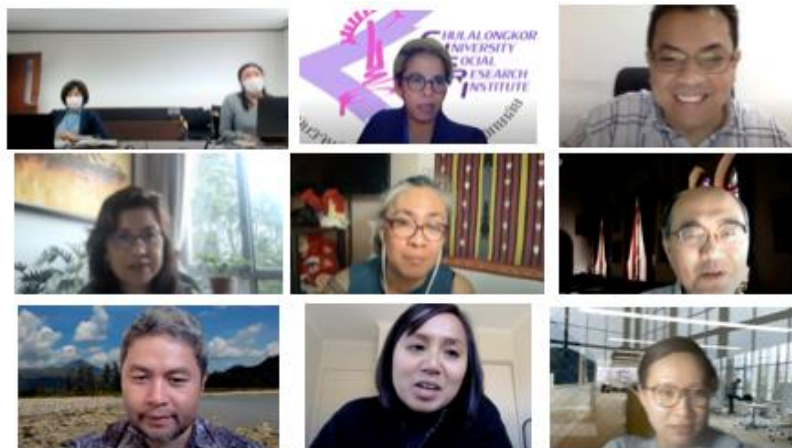
The 2nd Workshop was an occasion to share and exchange the initial findings of the Level 1 analysis on health security, food security, gender, economic security, aging society, forced migration, and peace and justice. Researchers presented the current plight of specific vulnerable groups and communities to understand the impact of the COVID-19. They also introduced the complex factors and underlying human insecurities in some East Asian countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan. The researchers also identified the responses of various actors, including national governments, international organizations, and local NGOs, to the pandemic. The case studies affirmed how COVID-19 has created multiple or intersecting vulnerabilities that compounded groups and communities' pre-pandemic insecurities. These findings will be elaborated in eight Working Reports that will serve as the interim result of this research project.

The project Advisors provided insightful feedbacks and shared their reflections based on the case studies presented. Prof. Mely Caballero-Anthony emphasized the importance of looking at the impact of the virus on society and people, identifying who needs protection, who provides protection to whom and from what, and how are people protected, anchored on the Human Security framework. Prof. Sachiko Ishikawa expressed similar frustrations by other researchers in researching the face of COVID-19 limitation, especially travel restrictions that make field-based data collection challenging for researchers based in other countries. Prof. Yoichi Mine concluded this workshop by sharing his experience of using online communication as a substitute for oral interviews when fieldwork is restricted, and suggested that the role of the local government in promoting empowerment should be investigated.



The second authors' workshop participants, including the project advisors, researchers, and the JICA Ogata RI project team, joined from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, Philippines, and Japan. (From Zoom, April 17, 2021)

The 3rd Authors' Workshop was the presentation of research plans for the next level of the project, examining empowerment practices, particularly in response to the pandemic, and further analysis of the concept of empowerment in relation to Human Security. As the research project moves to its Level 2 analysis, the researchers are tasked to pay attention to the "empowerment" of the target groups with specific human security issue/s that are related to the SDG agenda. Advisors pointed out that examining the concept of empowerment from different perspectives, voices, and layers provides the more unique and interesting value of this project. It intends to look at engagement between individuals, groups, and communities to understand how they were empowered rooted in their experiences. A focused group discussion with a combination of online and offline data gathering is a valuable method to realize empowerment in collective action.



Participants of the third authors' workshop (From Zoom, May 22, 2021)

Overall, these workshops were fruitful exchanges of the preliminary findings, setting the context of the current insecurities confronted by the vulnerable groups and communities in each case study, and

begin to structure how they intend to explore the bottom-up empowerment against multiple and cascading human insecurities. From here on, the participating researchers will continue to develop their case studies adapting the progress of their Working Reports to capture the necessary details in understanding the empowerment practices against the backdrop of this pandemic.
