

Two unconventional projects aiming to address the root causes of disasters in South East Asia: Alliance for Resilient Urban South East Asia (ARUSEA) & Multi-hazards & Resilience in hyper-Expanding Cities (wRECK)

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Many cities in South East Asia, like Hanoi or Metro-Manila, are expanding faster than the necessary planning and safety regulations. This rapid expansion, combined with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (SFDRR) continue failing¹ to deal with the root causes of disasters motivated two unconventional projects: Alliance for Resilient Urban South East Asia (ARUSEA²) and the Multi-hazards & Resilience in hyper-Expanding Cities (wRECK³).

The primary goal of wRECK is to better understand the dynamics of resilience of hyper-expanding cities exposed and vulnerable to multi and cascading hazards and disasters over time scales of days to decades. wRECK tackles UN Sustainable Development Goals 11 (cities and communities) and 13 (climate change) and is designed to conform to UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme requirements. The project is unconventional as it brings together scientists in environmental systems, disaster risk analysis, and scholars from environmental history, the creative arts and cultural policy, as well as stakeholders from local to national government, from individuals to institutions. Together, we are developing a unique and holistic chronological database (FORINSEA) that places the development of socio-economic policies against the occurrence of natural hazards and their impacts (some of which are disasters). In coordination with stakeholders, we are examining part of this record forensically in an attempt to reveal linkages and interactions between policies, regulations, and the history of hazards and disasters.

Exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards, exacerbated by environmental stress and long-term change can cause poverty cycles to persist, hindering socio-economic development. ARUSEA is a Global Network which mission is to create a global community that empowers vulnerable urban slums dwellers to escape the poverty trap by increasing their support system resilience to Natural-Human hazards. The network operates in Hanoi, with the ambition to scale-up to other large cities in South East ASIA. Our approach to increasing resilience of the support system of urban dwellers to natural-human hazards and achieving economic stability has social entrepreneurs at its center. Because social leaders and their organizations are creating innovative models to drive equilibrium change—the disruption of social, economic, and political forces that enable unsafe, non-inclusive, inequality, injustice, and other thorny social and environmental problems to persist. Social transformation is never the work of a single actor. It is almost always the result of powerful connection and collaboration between innovators, agitators, thought leaders, and those who hold levers of power in business and government. ARUSEA provide a space to help forge those connections and morph them into real partnerships and impact.

We acknowledge funding from the Royal Society (Challenge-led Grants Programme 2018) for wRECK project (ref CHL\R1\180192) and from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (Global Challenge Research Fund) for the ARUSEA project (ref EP/T003472/1)

¹ Int J Disaster Risk Sci (2020) 11:239–249 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-020-00263-0>

² <https://www.arusea.org/>

³ <https://resilienthyperexpandingcities-bgs.hub.arcgis.com/>