

People and Environment – Development and Resilience in Asia (PEDRA)

The vision of the PEDRA research group is to achieve more inclusive governance that better supports equitable, sustainable and resilient development in Asia, within and across national boundaries.

People and Environment – Development and Resilience in Asia (PEDRA) is a research group in SEI’s Asia Centre, in Bangkok, Thailand. PEDRA conducts high-quality independent research on the human dimensions of environmental and socio-economic changes and risks in Asia. Our aim is to advance the understanding of the complex interactions of human and environmental systems and the implications of those interactions for poverty reduction, gender equality, livelihood security, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and equitable, sustainable and resilient development. Along with conducting research and analysis, we work to build scientific and organizational capacity across the region, to support holistic, inclusive and integrated approaches to development challenges.

Our approach

PEDRA applies systems-oriented approaches to examine the interplay between institutions and individual actors in creating social vulnerability or resilience. We look at environmental and socio-economic transitions in Asia through multiple methodological “lenses”, including vulnerability, risk, resilience and adaptation, livelihoods, gender, political ecology/economy. We also emphasize the need for accountability and transparency in all development-related decisions.

Our team has a strong social science background, with expertise in anthropology, cultural studies, development studies, human geography, political science, development communication and sustainability science.

The policy context

Key issues of interest to our team include disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, population growth, migration and urbanization, land use change, and water, energy and food security. We examine these issues in the context of social justice and human well-being.

Many Asian countries are growing rapidly, but they face multiple barriers to achieving equitable, sustainable and resilient development. They need to grapple with large demographic and economic shifts, increasing trade and globalization, even as climate change and environmental degradation pose new threats. Without effective governance and planning, development may exacerbate income inequality, unsustainable resource use, biodiversity loss, and other drivers of vulnerability.

Addressing these complex challenges will require increased cooperation and shared learning across economic sectors, government agencies, research communities, and stakeholder groups. Improved regional integration and cooperation is



SEI is working closely with leaders of subaks – traditional farmer organizations – to strengthen governance of the Bali Cultural Landscape.

crucial in this regard – for example, through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which provides opportunities for discussing the trade-offs between different potential development pathways. At the same time, vital decisions are being made at the global level that will affect the region for many years to come: on the post-2015 agenda for disaster risk reduction (the Hyogo Framework for Action), climate change, and sustainable development (the UN Sustainable Development Goals).

Key projects led by the PEDRA team

PEDRA team members are involved in a wide range of projects across Asia and worldwide. Below we present a selection of current projects that reflect the breadth and diversity of our work. In particular, these projects highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement, co-production of knowledge, and joint learning in facilitating transformative change towards more equitable, sustainable and resilient development in Asia.

1. SEI Initiative on Transforming Development and Disaster Risk Reduction

This SEI-wide initiative will connect disaster risk reduction with inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. It will carry out context specific research on a range of socio-economic changes and environmental risks. The knowledge generated will be deployed to enable communities to cope with hazardous situations, and support policy and practice to pursue development that takes account of new and emerging risks.

Contact: *Frank Thomalla*

2. Adapting to climate change in peri-urban Southeast Asia

Funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), this project advances research and professional development under the thematic area of social and gendered adaptations to climate-related water stresses in peri-urban areas in three Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines. It examines adaptive responses to these stresses in order to better inform and address the needs for planning for climate change adaptation and vulnerability reduction.

Contact: *Bernadette P. Resurrección*



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Fishing on the Tonlé Sap, in Cambodia, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

3. Rethinking gender in development in Asia

The key concerns of this comparative research project, supported by the Research Council of Norway, include exploring how new environmental conditions affect women and men in ways that may deepen inequalities and also create new forms of stratification as well as opportunities. Case studies were conducted in Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia. *Contact: Bernadette P. Resurrección*

4. Mekong Partnership for the Environment

The Mekong Partnership for the Environment Project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to broaden stakeholder engagement to address the anticipated social and environmental costs and benefits of regional development projects in the Lower Mekong Subregion. SEI is involved in formulating the gender equality inclusive strategy of the project, forging linkages among Mekong region networks, and conducting the action research component of the programme. *Contact: Bernadette P. Resurrección*

5. Politics, governance, experiences and responses to flooding from the locals' and migrants' perspectives in ASEAN

This project, funded through Programme Support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), aims to develop a deeper understanding of the linkages between flooding and migration in Laos, as part of a wider project involving Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The goal is to help policy-makers understand the drivers of vulnerability to flooding, and how flooding affects migration in the ASEAN countries. *Contact: Albert Salamanca*

6. Partnership in Governance Transition – the Bali Cultural Landscape

This project, funded through Sida Programme Support, supports the ancient democratic assemblies of farmers (subaks) in Catur Angga Batukau in Bali manage their newly declared landscape as a UNESCO World Heritage Site through training, consensus-building, and facilitation of engagement with relevant key government and civil society stakeholders in Bali and Jakarta. *Contact: Albert Salamanca*

7. An analysis of longer-term (5–10 years) recovery following major disasters in the Asia Pacific Region: Lessons for resilient development

This project, funded by the Asia Pacific Network for Global Environmental Change Research, aims to undertake a critical analysis of the longer-term recovery process in five selected

case studies of disasters that occurred in the Asia Pacific region in the last 10 years. The project will generate insights that will improve our understanding of the types of transformations required in societies at risk from natural hazards and climate change impacts in order to become more resilient to such risks, and how these transformations can be understood and guided by policy based on resilience thinking.

Contact: Frank Thomalla

8. Transformative Knowledge Network on Context, Culture and Environmental Risk

This network, supported by the International Social Science Council, aims to create a global learning alliance on context, culture and environmental risk by engaging a wide range of knowledge partners to increase collaboration and multi-disciplinarity in the social sciences. Its purpose is to build social science research capacity, generate new knowledge, showcase innovation in theory, methodologies and methods, influence policy relating to environmental risk, and spur new ways of thinking and doing. The outcomes will be improved scientific process, improved knowledge and strengthening of partnerships. *Contact: Frank Thomalla*

9. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Resilient Cities and Urban Areas Adapting to Extreme Waters (WASH & RESCUE)

This project, funded by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), aims to find solutions for improving human and environmental health by integrating disaster risk reduction in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems. The project focuses particularly on urban areas that are under threat from floods and droughts, making use of case studies from Haiti, Mozambique, the Philippines, India and Sweden. It identifies the preventive actions needed for WASH and investigates how investment in practical, long-term risk-reducing efforts can increase resilience to disasters and reduce the pressure on humanitarian responses. *Contact: Frank Thomalla*

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