

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Disaster relief and economic resilience in Monsoon Asia

Professor Katherine Gibson from the Institute for Culture and Society and an international team* has been awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Projects grant to investigate ways of coping with natural and economic disasters in South and Southeast Asia. The aim of the research is to map the unique economic practices in Monsoon Asia that aid recovery from catastrophes, and create a knowledge sharing network that strengthens resilience across the region.

'In the wake of the 2009 typhoon Ketsana in the Philippines, the world expected scenes of anguish, poverty, and families struggling to survive', Professor Gibson says. 'Yet the Banaba community from the Metropolitan Manila area became the site of unexpected resilience in the face of such tragedy. The citizens responded to the destruction by partnering with local non-government organisations (NGOs) to channel relief funds into a chain of interlinked, social enterprises that used local assets and waste materials to rebuild livelihoods and grow food.' Eco-friendly responses to disasters like this can be seen in many areas of Monsoon Asia, but have not been formally studied as an alternative to Western-style aid programs.

The project will analyse historical texts from the region detailing the content and names of place-based economic interactions. The findings will be put into a "Monsoon Asia Keywords Wiki" so that information can be quickly shared among stakeholders, NGOs and residents. This wiki will be refined through a series of workshops in the Philippines and Myanmar with local and international scholars, and case studies of several communities in each country.

The findings of this research may contribute to better disaster management initiatives for the



Photograph by Bobby Timonera

Australian government, Southeast Asian governments, and NGOs. In addition, the research could streamline Australia's foreign aid programs in the Philippines and Myanmar, ensuring funds are being distributed in the most effective way.

Project Title: Strengthening economic resilience in Monsoon Asia

Funding has been set at: \$197,300

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