

The Politics of Disaster Risk Governance in Indonesia and Myanmar: A Study into the Dynamics of the Governance Network on Disaster Risk Reduction

Among other Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia and Myanmar have the highest levels of vulnerability (UNISDR, 2010). Based on the indicator of the average annual number of casualties per one million residents, both countries have a high level of susceptibility to disaster. This study of Indonesia and Myanmar was initially motivated by the intriguing question of what makes these countries vulnerable to disaster. Most particularly, this study focused on disaster risk governance (DRG).

For the last three decades, the global policies and meetings on disaster risk reduction (DRR) have consistently repeated the commitment to strengthening DRG. The concept of DRG has been used as a frame to explain structural arrangements and multifaceted interaction among actors working with the objective of reducing risk.

As the core infrastructure of DRR, DRG requires the strong engagement of multiple actors involved in DRR in a country. The international community has converged on the principle of 'inclusive DRR'. Referring to the work of Gaillard and Mercer (2012), inclusive DRR denotes 'the collaboration of a wide array of stakeholders operating across different scales' (Gaillard and Mercer, 2012: 95). To achieve inclusive DRR, the governance of disaster risk also needs to provide space to the multiplicity of actors who have a stake in DRR. Inspired by these works, this thesis studies pluricentric mechanisms to reduce disaster risk.

Despite the international convergence on the idea that DRG has to be inclusive, and should bring in public and private actors, crucially, the actual practice of DRG faces challenges. At the beginning of this PhD trajectory, there were already signs of growing frustrations that appeared to overshadow the spirit of inclusiveness. However, these misgivings were not yet underpinned by empirical research. The chief objective of this study was therefore to re-visit the debate based on empirical findings. This thesis sought to investigate the dynamics of DRG in the global arena, Indonesia and Myanmar by zooming into three dimensions: the institutional setting of the governance network (polity), the power relations among network actors (politics) and the advocacy politics (policy). The following questions guided the research:

- (1) How has inclusive DRR been developed at the global level?
- (2) How does the principle of inclusiveness on DRG work in practice in Indonesia and Myanmar?
 - a. What are the characteristics of the polity, policy and politics of DRG in Indonesia and Myanmar?
 - b. To what extent has the actual practice of inclusiveness been affected by the domestic political environment?
 - To what extent has decentralisation in Indonesia contributed to DRG?
 - To what extent has political transition in Myanmar influenced the dynamics of DRG?
- (3) How has the idea of an interactive structure for DRR governance networks played out in Indonesia and Myanmar?

- What explains the different perceptions of risk among multiple actors involved in the process of interactive governance?
 - What are the actual challenges to the practice of inclusive DRR in DRG?
- (4) What are the lessons learned on interactive governance from the two case studies?

This research used qualitative methods for data collection, processing and analysis. The research design was further developed by including multiple qualitative methods of data collection within the case studies. Field research was conducted for 18 months, and a total of 129 people in Indonesia and 78 in Myanmar participated in this research through semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions. These participants included both government officials and non-state actors (representatives of international organisations and NGOs).

To organise the discussion, the thesis is divided into six chapters. After an introduction, chapter 2 traces the dynamics of global DRG to present the construction of inclusive DRR as a global framework. This chapter draws on the observation of two multi-stakeholder DRR events: the WCDRR in Japan in 2015 and the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR in Thailand in 2014. In Chapter 3, the case of decentralised DRG in Indonesia is explored with the objective of examining how changes in the political system influence the practice and reality of DRG. Chapter 4 turns to Myanmar, analysing the dynamics of DRG in the setting of political change. In Chapter 5, the thesis focuses on the role of NGOs in DRR multi-stakeholder advocacy mechanisms in Indonesia and Myanmar. This chapter emphasises the process of agenda setting, power relations between state and non-state actors, and advocacy channels for the DRR agenda in both countries. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter that synthesises the outcomes of the four studies and provides answers to the research questions.

Throughout the research, the main findings of the study are as follows: (1) DRR practice has transformed from a top-down, state-centric and largely non-political issue into a more pluricentric governance network. It has become a global paradigm characterised by robust political commitment, a high level of participation of multiple actors and advocacy at a wide range of levels. (2) Political changes in Indonesia and Myanmar have significantly influenced the process of strengthening DRG in both countries. This change has stimulated the transformation of DRG towards a pluricentric approach and inspired the practice of inclusiveness by using multi-stakeholder initiatives in policy advocacy. (3) In practice, inclusive DRR in DRG has encountered implementation challenges: an organisational structure that is heavy on bureaucracy, poorly integrated work, coordination issues and an organisational ego. The advocacy arena for NGOs and other non-state actors is widening, but this space is also shrinking because the decision-making process has failed to develop a comprehensive plan for building a partnership and the government remains dominant in the agenda-setting process. (4) Differing perceptions among actors translate into different agendas on DRR. (5) In Indonesia and Myanmar, advocacy through alliances and consortiums is continuously developing: Improvements in capacity, resources and strategy to build a robust advocacy profile significantly strengthen credibility and bargaining position vis-à-vis the government, the effectiveness of advocacy is determined by both the network and the positional power of the network vis-à-vis the government, and the process of interactive governance requires actors on both sides (government and non-state actors) to play an active role.

All in all, the thesis finds that the massive endorsement and policy changes towards inclusive DRR seem to negatively impact the capacity to reduce disaster in an effective and efficient manner. By state and non-state actors alike, DRG is often seen as too complex, too competitive and ineffective.

Four recommendations coming from this study are follows: (1) A specific mechanism for coordination to facilitate the process of information and knowledge exchange within the government structure should be developed. This mechanism should entail periodic and regular reports by DRR-relevant government bodies to help the work across all sectors. In parallel, this mechanism would also impact the dynamics of the governance network by offering more coordinated efforts to govern policy steering. Advocacy access, which is often hindered by heavily bureaucratic procedures, might also increase through an open coordination mechanism in the inter-ministerial arrangement. (2) In terms of resource issues, the current DRR global framework specifically highlights the agenda of regulatory and financial means as a way to empower local authorities. In attempting to achieve this goal, strong political willingness from member states is critical to improve the resource distribution from national to local governments. (3) A clear strategic advocacy agenda by non-state actors, as well as strong capacity in terms of resources and knowledge, would enable measurable action to empower these actors in negotiations with the government in the DRR governance network. (4) Governance network members should have a strong political willingness, a concrete strategic plan and robust resources.