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We are pleased to bring you the third issue of Beyond Relief!

In our **Feature Article**, S. Nanthini writes about pandemic responses in the Southeast Asian region, and how, with new variants emerging – each more dangerous than the last – vaccine access is especially important now more than ever.

This issue's **On the Ground** features some of the relief and fundraising efforts that Singaporean humanitarian organisations - World Vision Singapore, Relief Singapore - have undertaken.

On the academic front, our members have continued to publish articles and reports, covering a diverse range of topics including humanitarian diplomacy, disaster data gaps, and future directions in disaster governance.

In the Spotlight features an upcoming RSIS event - an online webinar to commemorate World Humanitarian Day. The title of this year's webinar is 'Responses to Crises during the Pandemic: Challenges and New Modalities'.

We have also highlighted a couple of exciting **Training Programmes**, which might be of interest to our readers.

We hope that the situation will improve soon so that we can resume our physical network meetings. In the meantime, stay healthy and safe!

As usual, we welcome your ideas, feedback and input and look forward to supporting joint efforts in research, networking and knowledge sharing. Do get in touch with either Christopher (christopherchen@ntu.edu.sg) or Al (iscook@ntu.edu.sg).



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FEATURE ARTICLE

Pandemic Responses in Southeast Asia

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One and a half years have passed since the COVID-19 pandemic burst onto the world stage and captured public attention. Since then, there have been over **192 million COVID-19 cases around the world, including over 4 million deaths**. COVID-19 has since disrupted almost every part of modern life with continuous surges in cases – even as vaccines are being administered to populations.

The first region to detect COVID-19 outside of China, Southeast Asia has been battling COVID-19 since **its first case** was detected in Thailand on 13 January 2020. Although the region had seen relative success in containing the virus at first, the recent surge of the now-dominant Delta variant has led to **record cases across the region**. This more transmissible variant has ripped through the world, even in countries such as Singapore, Australia and New Zealand where some modicum of control over COVID-19 had been established before this current surge. This has been made worse by the relatively low vaccination rates across the Asia-Pacific region. For example, **in Australia only 16.7% of those 16 and up** (as of 27 July 2021) have been fully vaccinated. In South-east Asia, other than **Singapore with 54.7%, Cambodia with 28.4% fully vaccinated and Malaysia with 18.3% fully vaccinated** (as of 27 July 2021), the rest of the countries are still in the single digits of vaccination rates – woefully short of any possible herd immunity.

These low rates of vaccination have been driven by factors including significant vaccine supply shortages, vaccine

hesitancy and conflict. Vaccine supply shortages were in part due to the monopolisation of vaccines by high-income countries, with only **0.3% total vaccines administrated globally having gone to low-income countries**. However, with the global vaccine sharing programme - COVAX - finally ramping up deliveries after months of delays (due in part to the sudden surge of cases in India), there have been signs of progress on the issue of vaccines availability.

Conflict, particularly in the case of Myanmar, has also been a significant factor in the current dismal response to COVID-19. With the country's healthcare systems already one of the weakest in the world, the coup has further strained healthcare resources. With healthcare workers continuing to join the civil disobedience movement and the military occupying hospitals, **healthcare workers are also being targeted**, with the military recently **charging the former head of the country's vaccination program with high treason**. Although the military have said that the **Covid-19 vaccination program** will continue, testing has **collapsed** and hospital systems have become **overwhelmed**.

Southeast Asia's efforts to inoculate its citizens has also been hampered by vaccine hesitancy even where vaccination campaigns are still ongoing. Although Chinese vaccines such as Sinovac have been the most available in the region, there has been hesitancy to use them, due in part to reports of lower efficacy. For example, **Thailand has announced** that it will be

using the AstraZeneca vaccine as the second dose for people who had received Sinovac as their first dose. In Singapore, the government has decided to **exclude people receiving the Sinovac vaccine from the national count of total vaccinations** as well as from the regulations applying to vaccinated people, citing inadequate efficacy data for the vaccine. In a bid to encourage more uptake of vaccinations among those eligible, some countries in the region including the Philippines and Thailand have started offering **perks to those willing** to get their jabs.

With new variants emerging – each more dangerous than the last – vaccine access is especially important now more than ever. Currently, Southeast Asian countries are moving to reduce their dependence on external manufacturers. For instance, Thailand is working to produce AstraZeneca vaccines locally for local and regional use; similarly, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam are all moving to develop and produce vaccines locally. However, despite these moves, vaccine equity is still some distance away. This inequity may in turn potentially lead to resentment in the region that might be difficult to overcome in the future. As such, reducing such inequity should be the goal for the region in the near to mid-future. This could be achieved via regional mechanisms such as the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and other regional reserves. After all, COVID-19 has more than amply proven that until all of us are protected, none of us are protected.

ON THE GROUND

World Vision Singapore: Emergency Response for COVID-19

Many countries in Asia, like India, Nepal and Indonesia, are experiencing an unprecedented catastrophic situation due to the spike in COVID-19 cases. The rapid increase in COVID-19 cases is crippling already over-burdened health care systems while the long-lasting pandemic has led to a major livelihood crisis across all sections of society. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, World Vision has reached over 62 million people, including over 27 million children, worldwide as part of our COVID-19 response. However, in light of the recent surge of COVID-19 cases, World Vision aims to expand its emergency response efforts in countries like India, Nepal and Indonesia, with interventions including but not limited to:

- Providing oxygen supply and beds for health centres
- Raising awareness raising on COVID-19 prevention and protection
- Providing food and cash assistance for hungry families
- Assisting families to restart their livelihoods

Already, efforts are underway in India and Nepal. In India, 10,396 PPE kits, 2,508 pulse oximeters and 1,557 oxygen concentrators have been distributed while cash and voucher assistance have been provided to over 15,000 families in the last 60 days. Similarly, over 113,000 people were supported in Nepal within the first 30 days, including the provision of 1,433 oxygen cylinders, 1,022 pulse oximeters and 1,225 PPE sets.

Learn more about World Vision's ongoing COVID-19 response [here](#).

RSG: Fundraising for Monsoon Response in Cox's Bazar

RSG has launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds to support UNHCR's interventions in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, such as training refugee volunteers as first responders in emergencies, building and fortifying infrastructure, moving refugees living in high-risk areas to safer areas, and providing refugees with plastic tarpaulins for the waterproofing of tent homes and bamboo for them to rebuild their shelters destroyed by the monsoon.

Click [here](#) for details of the campaign.

FEATURED REPORT



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No Safe Haven: The Plight of Rohingya Children Across Asia

This report from Save the Children documents how the most basic human rights of more than 700,000 Rohingya boys and girls are routinely violated in five countries: Myanmar, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Key findings include:

- The majority of Rohingya children now live outside their home country Myanmar. Bangladesh hosts some 451,000 refugee children, while in Rakhine State around 234,000 Rohingya children remain. Malaysia is home to

some 102,000 Rohingya, an estimated quarter of whom are children. Thailand (3,000-15,000) and Indonesia (several hundred) host the smallest Rohingya populations of the five countries, with no exact estimates of the number of children.

- Rohingya are almost always without legal protections. Myanmar unjustly denies citizenship to Rohingya, while other countries deny them refugee status and – in law or practice – denies newborn Rohingya children birth certificates. This lack of legal status exposes them to crackdowns, deportations and arbitrary detention and means they are mostly unable

to access healthcare and other social benefits.

- A whole generation of Rohingya are growing up without access to quality education, either because of explicitly discriminatory laws, or because policies that should enable them to go to school are not enforced. In Thailand, for example, all children have the right to basic education regardless of legal status, but this is patchily enforced and Rohingya children continue to slip through the net.

The full report is available [here](#).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

News Articles and Commentaries

Post-Covid Disaster Governance in Southeast Asia

Angelo Paolo L. Trias and
Alistair D. B. Cook
The Interpreter
7 May 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

Humanitarian 'Do No Harm': Plugging Gaps in Data Governance

S. Nanthini
RSIS Commentaries
18 June 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

Gender Differences in Resident Perceptions of Singapore's Covid-19 Circuit Breaker

Caroline Brassard, Patrick Daly, Benjamin Horton, Kathiravelu Laavanya, Jamie McCaughey, and Reuben Ng
Global-Is-Asian
29 June 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

How Singapore's Covid-19 Circuit Breaker disrupted every-day life

Caroline Brassard, Patrick Daly, Benjamin Horton, Kathiravelu Laavanya, Jamie McCaughey, and Reuben Ng
Global-Is-Asian
29 June 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

Journal Articles

Future Directions in Disaster Governance: Insights from the 2018 Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Re-sponse

Angelo Paolo L. Trias and
Alistair D. B. Cook
International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 58, 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.
(contact authors for free copy).

Humanitarian Diplomacy in ASEAN

Alistair D. B. Cook
Asian Journal of Comparative Politics, June, 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.
(contact authors for free copy)

Humanitarian Diplomacy as an Instrument for China's Image-building

Lina Gong
Asian Journal of Comparative Politics, June, 2021
Click [here](#) to read more. (open access)

Filling the Disaster Data Gap: Lessons from Cataloging Singapore's Past Disasters

Yolanda C. Lin, Feroz Khan, Susanna F. Jenkins, and David Lallemant
International Journal of Disaster Risk Science, 12, 2021
Click [here](#) to read more. (open access)

Reports

No Safe Haven: The Plight of Rohingya Children Across Asia

Save the Children
June 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

The Belt and Road Initiative: Vehicle for China's Humanitarian Action?

Lina Gong
RSIS Policy Report
June 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

Disasters in COVID-19: Implications for Nexus Governance

Alistair D. B. Cook and S. Nanthini
RSIS Policy Report
July 2021
Click [here](#) to read more.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Webinar by World Vision Singapore: Climate Change and Me



On 26 June 2021, World Vision hosted a webinar entitled "Climate Change and Me" to explore the correlation between the climate crisis and the human face of climate change. It also examined the innovative climate action solutions currently available to safeguard our children's futures. The webinar featured three inspiring individuals with different experiences and motivations, but are united with one common goal - to

protect our planet and the most vulnerable people.

Featured speakers included Tony Rinaudo, World Vision's Senior Climate Action Advisor who is famously known as The Forest Maker. Having lived and worked in Africa for several decades, he has discovered and put in practice a solution to extreme deforestation and desertification of the Sahel region. Rather than planting new trees, his technique involves actively managing the "underground forest" – a method that has restored 50,000 km² of land with over 200 million trees in Niger alone. Allan Masibay, a farmer and village leader from the Philippines, also shared on his experience farming Abaca – a plant with the potential to green the lands, protect watersheds, replace plastics as a raw material, and improve the livelihoods of indigenous communities. Nomundari

Urantulga, a 16-year-old from Mongolia who previously spoke at a United Nations forum on a similar topic, also shared her climate change experience in Mongolia particularly related to air and water pollution.

To discover how you can also help vulnerable children and their families fight climate change, watch the webinar recording [here](#) or visit [World Vision's website](#) to find out more.

Launch of Hawkins Gallery



On World Refugee Day (20 June 2021), Relief Singapore (RSG) launched a new

online art gallery called Hawkins Gallery that focuses on forced displacement. The inaugural event was a photography exhibition titled "Are You Home Yet? Plight of Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh." It was organised by RSG in collaboration with UNHCR. As part of the photography exhibition, an online talk "Rain rain go away: Monsoon rains, COVID-19 and the miserable plight of the Rohingya" was held on June 30 featuring UNHCR Senior Field/Technical Coordinator Charles Campbell, who shared about the dire circumstances of the Rohingya, humanitarian activities of UNHCR and its partners, as well as the UN Refugee Agency's response to monsoon threats.

Click [here](#) to view the exhibition and the video recording of the talk.

Upcoming Webinar: RSIS World Humanitarian Day 2021 'Responses to Crises during the Pandemic: Challenges and New Modalities'

RSIS will be hosting an online webinar to commemorate World Humanitarian Day. The title of this year's webinar is 'Responses to Crises during the Pandemic: Challenges and New Modalities'. With this theme, the webinar will discuss: (i) Challenges faced by the humanitarian sector during COVID-19, (ii) Potential solutions and initiatives to help alleviate these challenges, (iii) Risk perception and its effects on crisis management. The panel discussion will aim to raise public awareness on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the region by providing a venue for exchange of ideas, insights and experiences from those

involved in the protection and assistance of vulnerable groups displaced by disasters, particularly from a Singaporean perspective. The annual event brings together local players in the humanitarian sphere to celebrate the dedication of humanitarian workers around the world, and to remember those in most need of assistance.

Date/Time: 19th August 2021/1pm-2pm (GMT+8)

Platform: Zoom

Click [here](#) to register.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Foundations of Volunteerism by Relief Singapore

RSG has rolled out a training programme on the key fundamentals of volunteerism. The short course provides insights into other attributes besides compassion that a volunteer should possess in order to maximise his or her impact.

For more details, contact RSG at contact@relief.sg.

Digitally Connected Learning on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord DCL)

The virtual event will be held from 23 August to 1 October 2021. It comprises 5-6 hours of mandatory individual/group work per week over a period of six weeks. Upon successful completion, participants will receive a certificate equal to the residential UN-CMCoord course. Graduates will be considered for future UN-CMCoord training events.

For registration details, click [here](#).
Registration closes 5th August.



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