

Learning and Preparing for Disasters with People with Disabilities in Banda Aceh, Indonesia (2024/7/17 - 26)

Theme: hazard, disaster, disability, vulnerability, resilience, 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, inclusiveness

Venue: Banda Aceh, Indonesia

URL: <https://www.kafalahindonesia.org/>
<https://www.slbtncs.sch.id/>
<https://aiwest-dr.usk.ac.id/#overview>

From July 17 to July 26, 2024, Associate Professor Sebastien Boret (International Research Collaboration Office), Assistant Professor Hyejeong Park (Disaster Medical Informatics Lab), and their Indonesian collaborator Prof. Alfi Rahman (Syiah Kuala University), conducted fieldwork on disaster and disabilities in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This international collaboration aimed to enhance social resilience and develop an inclusive approach to disaster risk reduction.

Disaster and Disability 20 years after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

Since July 2023, the research team has interviewed individuals with disabilities and organizations involved in disability welfare and disaster prevention in Banda Aceh. This time, they carried out interviews with over ten people with disabilities facilitated by the local office of Kafalah, Indonesia. We learned about the experience of a diverse range of individuals, from young in their 20s with hearing and speech impairments working in graphic design to older men and women leading an NGO for and with people with visual impairments. We also interviewed two young men with bodily deformities about their respective lives as a YouTube content maker (almost 400K followers) and a disability activist. Through these interviews, we gathered a comprehensive view of people with disabilities in Acehnese society with insights into their disaster perception and experiences, their social interactions and communities, and their status and welfare.

Our discussions revealed as much about capacity as their needs. They believe empowering people with disabilities is necessary for inclusive disaster risk reduction. In conclusion of this meeting, some of the interviewees and representatives of the Kafalah Foundation were invited to participate in the 'Disaster and Disability Special Session' at the AIWEST-DR conference (November 8-9, 2024), and Assoc. Prof. Boret suggested the conception of 'The Ability Project', an inclusive platform where people working in the world of disability will share their experience with their community.

Disaster Preparedness Program for School Children with Disabilities

The second activity was a three-day disaster education and evacuation drill conducted at SLB TNCC (Sekolah Luar Biasa the Nanny Children Center) from July 22 to July 24. The participants included 33 teachers and 60 students with physical and intellectual disabilities, our research team, an NGO, and supporters from Basarnas Aceh (The National Search and Rescue Agency of Indonesia). Day 1 consisted of the teachers' training and a last review of the material in English and Indonesian. Day 2 focused on introducing and sensitizing students to natural hazards and early prevention measures. Day 3 saw the performances of earthquake and tsunami drills.

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Based on our observations and the feedback sessions with all the participants, this event successfully enhanced collective and mechanical solidarity to increase risk awareness and respond to disaster. The program also fostered mutual support among teachers, between teachers and students, and among students themselves. The program consisted of adapted tasks (videos, card games, coloring hazards, etc.) for the participants to learn actively about hazards and dangerous situations, learn self-protective actions, and practice evacuations within the school. Finally, we praised the students and teachers for their active participation, proved their capacities, and made the classes and the drills their own. As reported in the local news, this experience will have a lasting impact on the school while paving the way for similar.

Lastly, Assoc. Prof. Boret, Park, and Prof. Alfi visited Prof. Syamsidik, director of the Tsunami and Disaster Mitigation Research Center (TDMRC) at Syiah Kuala University, to discuss AIWEST-DR 2024, commemorating the 20th year of the 2004 tsunami in Banda Aceh on November 8-9, 2024. Prof. Syamsidik commented on the importance and the originality of our research on the experiences of people with disabilities to provide a broader and comprehensive perspective for building social inclusiveness capacity and resilience. In addition to our special session on disaster and disability, Prof Syamsidik invited us to present our findings at forthcoming national conferences on disaster preparedness activities in Indonesia.



Focus Group Interview,
Kafalah Indonesia (NGO)



Drop, Cover, and Hold on Session,
Disaster Workshop at SLB TNCC



Coloring Activity
For Increasing Disaster Awareness



Group Photo at SLB TNCC



Evacuation Drills

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