



ASEAN Forum 2020: Responses to COVID-19

3-4-5 August 2020 & 12 August 2020

Online event: Tune in on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) for video updates, and on [iTunes](#) and [Spotify](#) for podcast updates!



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Sydney Southeast
Asia Centre

Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre is forging Australia's relationship with one of the world's fastest growing regions by educating students and building new partnerships with academics and governments based on research excellence.

With more than 500 academics across six faculties and three schools working on and in Southeast Asia, the University of Sydney has one of the highest concentrations of regional expertise in the world.

Overview

ASEAN and Responses to COVID-19



As 2020 began, the world watched as the COVID-19 pandemic slowly spread its way across the globe. Across the countries of ASEAN, this unprecedented event played out in diverse ways. Countries like Vietnam demonstrated highly effective ways of managing the virus, whereas others, like Indonesia, spent considerable time denying its existence. These experiences reflect quite different responses to the pandemic – differences that underscore the diversity of political, economic and health landscapes across the ASEAN region.

Join our experts for a week-long exploration into how ASEAN and the countries it comprises have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic at a government level, economically, and in terms of health and livelihoods.

Event proceedings

Each of our specialists will record a 5-minute video presentation which will be made available in the week of 3-5 August 2020. They are instructed to pitch their talk to an interested, but not necessarily academic, audience so the talks are able to be enjoyed by a wide range of people.

In addition, our speakers will be recording 15-minute podcasts about the same topics, which will also be made available in the week of 3-5 August 2020.

Following each presentation, audience members will be invited to send in their questions by commenting under the videos **by 5pm (AEST), Monday 10 August 2020**. The speakers will then respond to the main questions raised by the audience in a panel discussion, which will be made available on Wednesday 12 August 2020.

All videos recorded as part of **ASEAN Forum 2020: Responses to COVID-19** will be made available for public viewing on our [Facebook page](#) and our [YouTube channel](#) from the 3rd of August 2020 onwards.

All podcasts recorded as part of **ASEAN Forum 2020: Responses to COVID-19** will be made available for public listening on your favourite podcast provider ([iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), [SoundCloud](#), and more!).



Keynote Address: ASEAN's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected shock to health and economic systems worldwide. Like most institutions around the world, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, was ill-prepared for the rapid and wholistic way in which the pandemic affected its member nations. In the early months of the pandemic, ASEAN struggled to develop a coherent response to the unfolding events, but by April 14, it released a Declaration of the Special Summit on Coronavirus Disease and developed the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund. These initiatives are premised on the commitment to a unified regional response to the pandemic, though, in practice, ASEAN member states have prioritised their national interests over the needs of the region.



Dr Thushara Dibley
University of Sydney

Thushara is the Deputy Director of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. She researches social movements in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Her recent research projects have focused on the role of NGOs in peace-building in Timor-Leste and Indonesia and on the disability movement in Indonesia.

She is the author of *Partnerships, Power and Peacebuilding: NGOs as Agents of Peace in Aceh and Timor-Leste* (2014) and co-editor of *Activists in Transition: Progressive Politics in Democratic Indonesia* (2019).

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Comparing Government Responses to COVID-19 across Southeast Asia

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, various Southeast Asian countries were expected to fare differently. Thailand was seen as the most prepared, while Timor-Leste was seen as the least. Six months on, the Philippines and Indonesia have the highest death rates in the region, while Vietnam has had no double-digit new cases in nearly two months. This talk will focus on government responses across a key number of Southeast Asian nations, noting both their comparatively similar and different approaches to tackling the pandemic. Why did some states take on the fast and hard lockdown approach early on, while others took a soft and slow approach? How much did states rely on heavy surveillance of their population? More importantly, did the government's strategy have a direct impact on each country's overall performance in battling the pandemic. Due to its political diversity, Southeast Asia is a fascinating region to examine a variety of government strategies in handling the COVID-19 crisis with implications for the rest of the world.



Aim is a Lecturer in Comparative Politics. Her research interests centre on the relationships between digital media, political participation and political regimes in Southeast Asia. Aim is particularly interested in the role of social media in shaping state-society relations and inducing political and social change. Together with Dr Fiona Martin, Aim was recently awarded funding by Facebook to help the social media giant understand how better to regulate hate speech online in the Asia-Pacific region. Her other scholarly works examine popular movements against democracy in democratising states.

Dr Aim Sinpeng
University of Sydney

Twitter: @aimsinpeng

The Current and Ongoing Healthcare Impacts of COVID-19 across ASEAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the Asia-Pacific region overnight. This presentation will explore the current and ongoing healthcare impacts of COVID-19 across the region. Responses to the viral disease have varied substantially across the region, with some countries introducing strong and effective measures while others have experienced rampant disease. The pandemic has tested the public health capacity of countries, as well as the capacity of governments to respond. Accurate evaluation of the impacts of COVID-19 is also varied – with some countries lacking the diagnostic capacity to quantify the incidence of disease. As new treatments and, potentially, vaccines are developed the capacity of countries to deploy these new strategies will also influence the trajectory of the pandemic. The nexus between the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 will see a significant widening of socioeconomic inequalities in many countries, and impair the control of other endemic infectious diseases such as tuberculosis.



A/Prof Gregory Fox
University of Sydney

Greg is a respiratory physician, epidemiologist and clinical trialist committed to using research to improve health care among disadvantaged populations. He is clinical Academic Lead (Research) for the Faculty of Medicine and Health at Cumberland Campus. Greg's research interests include the epidemiology of infectious disease in resource-limited setting, cluster randomised trials, clinical trials and digital technologies to support health care. He also has interests in systematic reviews and meta-analyses, translation of evidence into policy, decision analysis and capacity building in research.

Twitter: @foxsimile

Weathering Typhoon COVID: Economics of the Pandemic

The nature and extent of risk exposure determines the severity of the effects of a crisis. From the perspective of international trade, this session examines the pre-COVID-19 risk exposure of the ASEAN region, investigates its post-COVID-19 economic effects, and explores possible pathways for Southeast Asia to emerge from the ongoing crisis. As in the case of other regional integration initiatives, the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 encouraged the formation of economic relationships among countries the region. But because the ASEAN framework is unlike any other in the world, the emergent relationship structures in Southeast Asia are different compared to those in other regions. The characteristics of ASEAN integration have also shaped the ways in which individual Southeast Asian countries have forged economic relationships with other countries outside the region. These intra-regional and global relationships forged over time have created a very distinctive ASEAN risk environment. The nature of this risk has played a significant role in defining the unfolding economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the entire Southeast Asian region and on its individual nations. These insights into the nature of ASEAN risk and the ensuing nature of the COVID-19 crisis impact offer a glimpse of the features, opportunities and hurdles of the region's long road to recovery.



Sandra is a Lecturer in the Sydney Business School, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. Prior to embarking on an academic career, Sandra was a consultant to a wide range of medium- to large-scale companies, specialising in international business development and organisation development. In the area of international business development, her consulting engagements were mainly aimed at informing clients' strategic business expansion efforts in Southeast Asia, and included risk assessments, market attractiveness studies, competitive analyses and business feasibility analyses.

Dr Sandra Seno-Alday
University of Sydney

Twitter: @SenoAlday

The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Livelihoods for those in the Region

The livelihood impacts of COVID-19 have been diverse and far-ranging, with social restrictions initially affecting urban economies before reverberating through to rural Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, where the virus continues to spread, restrictions on mobility and social gatherings have severely restrained informal systems of wealth transfer and social protection. At the same time, formal government support programs have struggled to reach the most vulnerable households. Appropriate responses to the crisis demand a better understanding of rural-urban interactions across contemporary Southeast Asia and a long-term strategy to ensure access to a diversity of livelihood assets.



A/Prof Jeffrey Neilson
University of Sydney

Jeff is an Associate Professor in Geography at the University of Sydney. He is also the Indonesia Country Coordinator for the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. Jeff's research focuses on economic geography, environmental governance and rural development in Southeast Asia, with specific area expertise on Indonesia. Jeff's research interests are diverse and include issues of food security and food sovereignty, the global coffee industry, the global cocoa-chocolate industry, agrarian reform movements, sustainable livelihoods and alternative measures of well-being, agroecology, and environmental governance.

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