

Urban Climate Resilience in Southeast Asia Partnership (UCRSEA) Research Funding Criteria

The Urban Climate Resilience in Southeast Asia Partnership project (UCRSEA) is designed to fill a critical gap in understanding around regionalization and urbanization, and the growing risks posed by climate change in the countries of Southeast Asia. As such, the Partnership is committed to **viewing urbanization as a transformative process** in terms of poverty, vulnerability, growth and climate change impacts. In particular, the focus is on a historical political economy or political ecology perspective. We seek to understand ecology-human society interactions, primarily based on actor-oriented approaches.

The Partnership is based in **four regional partner countries (Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam)**, all of which are experiencing dramatic urban and economic growth following a period of conflict (UNDP 2012). Fundamental social transformation with population shifts to urban areas, away from traditional agriculture sectors, is underway. Expansion of urban areas in coastal zones, deltas, and river basins has exacerbated climate related vulnerabilities in areas that are already ecologically fragile (UN-Habitat 2011; Tanner et al. 2009).

A guiding intellectual principle of UCRSEA is that of supporting innovative research, particularly scholarly inquiry that links with the Partnership's focus on urbanization as dependent on complex systems. Complexity theory suggests that better governance **requires flexible and adaptive institutions capable of dealing with uncertainty and risk** in ways that are representative and participatory (Folke et al. 2005; Tyler and Moench 2012).

A limited amount of funding is available to support research conducted by graduate students and research partners. The following are general criteria for all research supported by the UCRSEA project.

Research supported by the project must:

- Be pertinent to the topic of urbanization/regionalization, climate change, and vulnerabilities and/or resilience;
- Relate to one or more of UCRSEA's partner countries: **Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam**, and where applicable one or more of our **eight target sites: Koh Kong and Battambang (Cambodia), Dawei and Bago (Myanmar), Khon Kaen triangle and Mukdahan province (Thailand), Lao Cai and Ninh Binh (Vietnam)**; and
- Address one (or possibly more) of the project's three research questions:
 1. How will climate change impact the poverty and vulnerability of urban residents in Southeast Asia?
 2. What does knowledge, from both academic literature and action research, tell us about creating climate resilient urban governance that is both inclusive and equitable?
 3. How can we strengthen the agency of individuals, groups and institutions to improve economic, physical and social well-being in urban areas, particularly in response to climate change?

In addition, research **should conform to the UCRSEA's core research principles** (see below).

Core Research Principles for UCRSEA

The UCRSEA project is particularly concerned with climate risk and resilience in secondary cities, where rapid urbanization is driven in part by integration in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community. While these processes promise to deliver economic benefits, they will likely also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and environmental pressures (Friend and MacClune 2013). UCRSEA adopts a key set of conceptual and methodological principles:

- Bringing together actor-oriented approaches with complex systems approaches – assessing the interaction between individual/household/community wellbeing and vulnerability and the fragility of urban systems (viz. water, food, energy, shelter, transport)
- Applying actor-oriented approaches to assessments of urban climate vulnerability, and capacity to deal with shocks and crises based on historic events
- Assessing how current and emerging vulnerabilities might be exacerbated by climate change, and how these vulnerabilities are distributed between and among individuals in different households and communities in urbanizing areas
- Applying participatory research methods, and supporting participatory research processes that empower citizens and open space for informed public dialogue

For more details on the research questions and UCRSEA's approach, we encourage you to consult the project's conceptual framework (<http://urbanclimateresiliencesea.apps01.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/conceptual-framework.pdf>).