

Keynote Talk: Community Empowerment in Indigenous Resettlement Communities of Southern Taiwan After Typhoon Morakot

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Typhoon Morakot produced more than 2000 mm of rainfall in two days during August 2009, causing catastrophic damage to parts of southern Taiwan. In the aftermath, 673 people died; 26 went missing; and 1,766 houses were destroyed. To facilitate recovery and reconstruction after the typhoon, the state approved a Special Act of Reconstruction for delimiting specific disaster regions and imposing forced relocation of villagers. A total of 3,096 households, mostly indigenous groups, were relocated to 35 permanent housing units from mountains to lowlands. Without any farmlands, villagers struggled to maintain their livelihoods. In 2020, indigenous villagers protested against the county government for its intention to demolish illegal structures, built by villagers as tourism-related businesses. This advocacy was supported and followed by several university faculty members and NGOs through numerous actions, including organizing protests, filing petitions, and conducting workshops to advocate indigenous human rights. In addition, through university-community collaborations, several “soft actions” were emerged, such as building genealogy and curating settlement history and pictures in local museums, for more community involvement and empowerment. Above all, these advocacy and community actions reflected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in “climate actions” and “reduced inequalities.” Moreover, through reflections of these actions, community post-disaster resilience may be more about resistance than adaptation. In the future, university scholars and students will continue to work with indigenous communities for advocating indigenous human rights in the era of climate change.

