

START's *Cities at Risk (CAR)* program brings together scientists, city planning professionals, politicians, and civil society representatives to improve collective understanding of how climate change will impact rapidly growing urban centers in their regions and to develop climate and disaster risk management strategies that take into account anticipated challenges. In Asia, START convenes international conferences, organizes intensive training institutes and supports city-specific research, communication and outreach activities that encourage coordinated action among scientists, policymakers and the public as well as the integration of scientific information into policy and planning. In Africa, recent CAR-focused scoping workshops have identified priority knowledge and capacity needs for urban risk management and resilience. Recommendations from the Africa workshops are underpinning design and development of a new 3-5 program of Cities at Risk research, education and training for the continent.

To date, START's *Cities at Risk* activities have engaged individuals and institutions from more than 20 cities in South and Southeast Asia and eleven cities in Africa. The program contributes directly to the international program on Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR).

Confidence and network are integral to capacity toolbox



Hendricus Andy Simarmata happily acknowledges that his involvement in START has been a key to his growth as a scientist and to his contributions to international work on global environmental change. Simarmata is a lecturer in the Urban Development Studies postgraduate program at the University of Indonesia and Head of Training and Professional Development Division for the Indonesia Association of Planners. He notes, "The START program helped me to understand global issues, to meet international experts, and to learn from other countries' experiences. This has helped me to understand and define development needs for my own region."

Having first engaged with START during a *Cities at Risk* training event on vulnerability assessment tools and methods (held in Bangkok in 2010), Simarmata later presented his evolving research at the 2011 START-organized Second International Conference on Cities at Risk: Building Adaptive Capacities for Managing Climate Change Risks in Asian Coastal Cities (CAR II) in Taipei. Ideas generated at CARII subsequently led to a proposal to START from Jakarta, on which Simarmata was a lead proponent. The proposal was funded and now supports collaborative research and urban planning by researchers, provincial government and at-risk communities in North Coastal Jakarta.

Simarmata admits that he felt unprepared to work on global environmental change impact prior to his involvement with START. Because of the experiences, skills and confidence that he has been afforded by START opportunities, however, he recently collaborated with other START alumni to develop a training module on integrating GEC and urban planning tools with disaster risk reduction measures. The group plans to use the module to transfer such skills to others in their field. Simarmata adds, "My experiences with START have prompted me to write my doctoral research proposal. Thank you, START, for giving me valuable knowledge and an international network for my career development."

