ASEAN Supports Myanmar Flood Relief Efforts

NEWS STORY
One ASEAN One Response Roadshow in Manila | ACE Programme Graduation

INSIGHTS
5 Keys Personal Preparedness Elements

THE COLUMN
AHA CENTRE NEWS BULLETIN

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One ASEAN One Response
NEWS HIGHLIGHT
ASEAN Supports Myanmar Flood Relief Efforts

In this edition we touched on several aspects of disaster management from preparedness, adaptability and also being a part of a solution to disaster efforts. Within the month of June and July, Myanmar experienced torrential rains and faced severe flooding. In our ‘News Highlight’ we take a look at the role of AHA Centre working with the Government of Myanmar in its plan and solution in responding to the floods, how collaboration between neighboring countries and partners is vital in times of need.

In our ‘Insights’ we share information on how a community can be more prepared for disasters, speaking with LTC Ong Yuck Wah, Head Specialist Fire Training Centre, Civil Defence Academy of the SCDF, sharing the elements individuals should prepare for in the case of disaster situations. The Column also had the opportunity to get to know Mr. Bernard Chim, an expert in logistics for disaster management with about 30 years of experience. He shares with us his stories of humanitarian work and how he and other individuals can be a solution to strengthen disaster management in ASEAN. ACE Programme Second Batch Participants recently also commemorated a milestone, graduating from the six-month training programme. AHA Centre is hopeful that these future leaders can contribute and be the solution to a more united effort towards disaster management, upholding the spirit of ‘One ASEAN, One Response’.

We hope this edition of The Column inspires collaboration, knowledge sharing, and drives those to aspire to become stronger leaders in the disaster management field. If you wish to share some stories/articles/blogs/comments with us to improve the bulletin, please drop us a message at column@ahacentre.org, and we will do the rest.

Sincerely,
The Column Editor

From the end of June 2015 through to July, Myanmar experienced torrential rains. The heavy rainfall pouring into Myanmar caused severe flooding and prompted the Government of Myanmar to declare a state of emergency at the end of August. The flood, which affected 13 states and regions in Myanmar including Rakhine, Sagaing, Magway, Chin, Ayeyawady, Bago, Mandalay, Kayin, Kachin, Shan, Mon, Yangon and Tanintharyi, claimed 110 lives as of 19 August 2015.

Based on AHA Centre’s Situation Update no. 7, as of 19 August 2015, the flood have affected 1,615,335 people and displaced 333,179. More than 16,000 houses were destroyed, and more than 1.4 million acres of farmland were inundated, and 910,000 acres of land were damaged by the floods.

ASEAN through its AHA Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) has been working very closely with the Government of Myanmar in responding to the heavy floods in the central and northern parts of Myanmar.

“The AHA Centre wishes to convey our deepest sympathy for the families and communities who have lost their homes and family members,” said Mr. Said Faisal, Executive Director of the AHA Centre. “We would also like to commend the Government of Myanmar for its tremendous efforts in responding to the situation. ASEAN through the AHA Centre will continue to work closely with the Government of Myanmar in view of the current flooding.”

Three AHA Centre staff were deployed since the 6th of August to support RRD efforts in data collection, analysis and reporting. They report to the RRD’s Emergency Operations Centre in Nay Pyi Taw.

In the spirit of “One ASEAN, One Response”, ASEAN Member states through the AHA Centre have deployed the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) to support the Government of Myanmar. With members of the ASEAN ERAT activated on the evening of 5 August, their deployment was officially welcomed by the Government of Myanmar on 9 August.

As part of the ASEAN’s emergency response plans, the Disaster Emergency Logistics Support System for ASEAN (DELSA) was also activated. “The composition of the relief items have been tailored to cater to the needs of affected communities,” said Mr. Jangga Pacharee, Senior Officer of Preparedness and Response of the AHA Centre. The World Food Programme – United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) based in Subang, Malaysia, was actively involved in the logistical and resource mobilization plan, which includes chartering commercial flights to ensure smooth delivery of relief items to Myanmar. The relief items were supported by the Government of Japan, and the transport to Yangon was made possible by assistance from the Government of Australia.

As of 19 August 2015, ASEAN Member States’ responses to the situation are as follows:

CAMBODIA
The Royal Government of Cambodia has provided relief aid amounting to USD$100,000 to the affected families.

THAILAND
Ministry of Foreign Affairs handed over THB 5 Million (USD$142,000) to Myanmar Ambassador.
His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen provided THB 5 Million (USD$142,000) to Myanmar Ambassador.
Following the approval of the Cabinet, Thailand transported 120 tons of relief supplies including medical supplies, medical equipment, family kits, tents, blankets, and other items.
The Ministry of Commerce provided 200 tons of rice.
All goods were transported by land through Mae Sot-Myawaddy border and then to the relief centre in Yangon.

As of 9 August, the Thai community have gathered and donated cash amounting to MMK 700,000 (USD$660) and USD$130, as well as rice, instant foods, noodles and drinking water.

Based on AHA Centre’s Situation Update no. 7, as of 19 August 2015, the situation is said to have improved in many areas. Water had receded in approximately 1.08 million hectares of land from the 1.4 million hectares of inundated farmlands. Although there is no one solution in dealing with disaster situations such as this, early recovery works have begun in the flood-affected areas, with local authorities, civil society organisations, volunteers and communities working hand-in-hand to rehabilitate and rebuild neighbourhoods and public facilities.

Mobilisation of Relief Items from DELSA

| 2,000 Family Kit | 2,000 Kitchen Set |
| 2,000 Mosquito Nets | 2,000 Tarpaulins |
| 3 Mobile Storage Units (MSU) – temporary warehouse | 4 Aluminum Boat and Engines |

“Our would like to extend our greatest appreciation to the Government of Myanmar, for facilitating the incoming assistance from ASEAN to Myanmar and for the guidance given to the AHA Centre’s team during the operation. Moreover, OCHA wishes to convey our appreciation to all ASEAN Member States, and our ASEAN Dialogue Partners, the Government of Japan, and the Government of Australia, for their contributions and tremendous support for this emergency response. We believe our joint efforts will further enhance our vision in achieving One ASEAN One Response,” said Mr. Said Faisal during his visit to the emergency operations centre in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Column is a monthly news bulletin from AHACentre.org. Please visit the website for the latest activities from the organisation.
**The objective of the event was to familiarise the ASEAN Regional Member States as well as to socialise the “One ASEAN, One Response” vision where all ASEAN Member States unite and respond to disasters within, or outside the region as one.”**

In responding to disasters inside and outside the region, there needs to be a strong commitment and coordination among all ASEAN Member States. Philippines’ participation in the event, as it is evident in the attendance of representatives from Civil Society Organisations, the private sector and academicians, shows the country’s commitment and willingness to help achieve the “One ASEAN, One Response” vision.

In strengthening the collective response effort of the region, Member States can support each other in times of emergencies by way of providing diverse solutions and knowledge. In an effort to further communicate the “One ASEAN, One Response” vision across the region, the roadshow is scheduled to continue in other ASEAN Member States.

**The Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council – Office of Civil Defense (NDRRMC-OCD), along with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) recently conducted the ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ roadshow from 11 – 13 August 2015.**

The roadshow in Manila, Philippines, was the first one to be conducted overseas outside of Indonesia. It was attended by AHA Centre’s Executive Director, Mr. Said Faisal, and NDRRMC Executive Director and Civil Defense Administrator Undersecretary Alexander P. Pama.

Undersecretary Pama added, “We believe that this roadshow will bring significant impact towards the understanding of AHA Centre’s framework on disaster management and emergency response. Moreover, we can also understand how the AHA Centre’s work is part of the regional mechanism of disaster management and how the NDRRMC can fully utilise its support on information sharing, emergency response and also capacity-building programme for our officials.”

**As an AHA-ERAT, everyone has their own roles and responsibilities. For this deployment, our structure was as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Johnatan Adriatama (Team Leader)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy</td>
<td>Bao Nguyen Xuan (Information &amp; Technology Specialist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Yoram Lukis (Logistics Officer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a Logisticsian, I worked closely with Mr. Yoram Lukis from AHA Centre to facilitate the establishment of the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA), and the incoming relief items. Thanks for the support from the Government of Australia, we were able to transport the relief items from the warehouse of Yoram, Malaysia, to Myanmar with their C-130 aircraft. Further, collaborating with the World Food Programme in Myanmar, we supported 2 Mobile SARC teams that were based in Yangon and Mandalay.

Not being at the site, to assess the situation in Lapang Township of Hinthada District, I was kept up-to-date through images and videos taken from the field. It was apparent that the community was suffering from the impact of the flood. Most houses can only reach by boat. Most of the people affected had to stay at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp in Lapang Township. Despite all the difficulties, the ASEAN-ERAT had to collect valuable information from the field and report to RDC. Consequently, we had to dispatch relief items from the airport to the warehouses in the RRD Region at Yangon, meet with local suppliers, and supervise the installation of the mobile warehouse, a strong teamwork spirit, we achieved all the objectives of this deployment.

On August 18, 2015, the ASEAN-ERAT and ICTC had the chance to meet and share ideas on how to be a key element of the ASEAN-ERAT. I was impressed with the effective and efficient work, and will follow up on the recommendations. I hope that in the future, the ASEAN-ERAT will be a key element during the deployment with representatives from all ASEAN Member States during deployment.

I believe AHA-ERAT and AHA CENTRE adds value to the RRD of Myanmar. Consolidated efforts through EOC and coordination with EOC of RRD strengthened the coordination mechanism. On this ground, we worked closely with all RRD team at the Myanmar EOC. I am confident that the RRD will continue to work well from pre-deployment to the demobilisation largely thanks to the comprehensive training opportunity during the ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course last June.

This was a very memorable deployment for me personally, and I believe the experiences will also enrich my career as a responder. As a member of the ASEAN-ERAT I will continue to stay alert and be a functional symbol for the collective response efforts of ASEAN. One Vision. One Identity. One Community.
One ASEAN One Response

INSIGHTS

Having a ready and prepared community is an important aspect in disaster management. The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) actively educates communities through workshops, training, and organizations to impart civil defense knowledge and skills. Kobin as the Community Emergency and Engagement Committee (CECE), the SCDF works closely with its community partners to train and exercise the community through platforms such as the Emergency Preparedness Bag bag. To LTC Ong Yong Tuck Wah, Head Specialist Fire and Civil Defence Academy of the SCDF, there are key elements individuals should prepare for in case of disaster situations.

1. READY BAG

All households should have at least one Ready Bag at home. The Ready Bag should contain items that will help the household in case of an emergency. These items include:
A. Food
B. Water
C. Communication devices
D. Emergency supplies
E. First aid kit
F. Transistor radio
G. whistle
H. Important documents such as passport, insurance policies

2. FIRE EXTINGUISHER

It is recommended that each household should have at least one fire extinguisher. The fire extinguisher will be very useful in the event of a fire at home.

3. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KNOWLEDGE

Knowing the core skills such as basic first-aid, CPR and AED procedures, fire safety and casualty evacuation is an important element of personal preparedness. The Malaysian Civil Defence Force’s Community Emergency Preparedness Programme (CEPP) is an educational programme that engages the community to be ready and prepared for emergency situations. During the course, participants are taught how to operate a fire extinguisher and perform CPR.

4. AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR

The chances of survival of a cardiac arrest patient decreases by 7% to 10% for every minute that passes without applying CPR-AED. In Singapore, members of the public can have access to Automated External Defibrillators (AED). In 2014, the Singapore Heart Foundation and the SCDF established a National AED Registry, which is a database of AED locations in public spaces across the island. Through the AED’s "myResponder" mobile app, members of the public are directed to the nearest AED. In addition, by registering themselves as a Community First Responder, members of the public can be expected to respond to cardiac arrest cases within their immediate vicinity.

5. AUTHORITIES

During a disaster, it is important for the community to pay attention to the advisories and instructions provided by the authorities. For example, in an industrial accident resulting in a toxic chemical plume moving towards a populated area, the SCDF will issue an Important Message Signal (IMS) through the Public Warning System to swiftly alert the area to the threat and for emergency broadcast message. Such timely dissemination of information in enabling the community to adopt necessary self-protective measures goes a long way in minimising mass casualties and pandemonium.

THE OTHER SIDE

Mr. Bernard Cheomiler
World Food Programme’s Senior Logistics Training and Capacity Development Officer

Mr. Bernard Chomiler found his path in the humanitarian field when he met the General Director of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) (Doctors Without Borders) during the 2010 Haiti earthquake. After spending 10 years with MSF, another organization with which he has been highly recognised for his contributions to the logistics cluster. Speaking to The Column, the World Food Programme’s Senior Logistics Training and Capacity Development Officer shared his invaluable experiences, his concerns, and his drive to continue in working within the humanitarian field.

Can you describe your experience about the first time you were deployed for a disaster response?

I think it was a sudden influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in an area in Mozambique. MSF was the only organisation working within that province, so at the beginning we had to do almost everything which includes providing medical assistance, shelter, and food. We were not quite ready for that. There were many logistic problems and there was also a lack of staff. It was difficult dealing with the fact that we were not able to do what needed to be done to save all the people in need, but I learned to cope with that.

Based on your experience, was there a moment where you were faced with a challenge related to logistics and needed to think of a solution quickly?

In 1999, former Liberian leader Charles Taylor controlled most of Liberia except for the capital, Monrovia, which was controlled by ECOWAS troops. During the First Liberian Civil War, the most affected provinces were in the West part of the country. I was with MSF, and based on my survey, the population not only needed medical assistance but also food. No organisation was operating there at the time to provide assistance. Charles Taylor did not want us to provide assistance through Monrovia. The only other option was to go through the neutral port of Liberia where the infrastructure was better. I tried going there with my truck convoy anyway, but unfortunately it was blocked at the borders. I was really stuck there. Eventually, in May 2000, the new government came in, and it became impossible. I had to resort to going through Monrovia, but in doing so I had to reach an agreement with both Charles Taylor and ECOWAS. Considering the difficulties and complexity of the situation at the time, I was fortunate to be able to reach an agreement with Charles Taylor and ECOWAS. Three weeks later my trucks managed to pass through Monrovia.

What were your most moving experience leading humanitarian responses?

It’s difficult to choose one. In Liberia, in the middle of a conflict happening in between 1990-1991, I arrived with an MSF convoy to an area where a lot of people were in the street, but the crowd there was clapping, singing and dancing. At a different time, in the very remote province of Afghanistan, the World Food Programme’s Community Emergency Preparedness Programme (CEPP) worked on a programme that engages the community to be ready and prepared for emergencies. The local people were very happy in learning how to operate a fire extinguisher and perform CPR.

What motivates you to continue working within this field?

I love what I do, and I believe I can continue to be useful. Perhaps not in the same way as before, but I can continue to transform my knowledge and experience to others.

What is the one thing you want people to understand about your work, or humanitarian work in general?

It is a fantastic and very rewarding work. Our job should not be seen as just “to help people.” What I have been doing for the past 30 years is not just merely about helping others, but also about oneself. It’s a very precarious environment. Yes, I have put my life in danger, but I have gained so many valuable things. I have met so many great people, and discovered great cultures around the world, and that is invaluable.
One ASEAN
One Response

About ASEAN
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia. As set out in the ASEAN Declaration, the aims and purposes of ASEAN among others are to accelerate the economic growth, social progress, cultural development, to promote regional peace and stability as well as to improve active collaboration and cooperation.

About the AHA Centre
The AHA Centre is an inter-governmental organisation established on 17 November 2011, through the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, witnessed by the ASEAN Heads of States, from 10 ASEAN Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Centre was set-up to facilitate the cooperation and coordination among ASEAN Member States and with the United Nations and international organisations for disaster management and emergency response in the ASEAN region.

About AADMER
The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally-binding regional multi-hazard and policy framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management in the 10 ASEAN Member States. The objective of AADMER is to provide an effective mechanism to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in social, economic and environmental assets, and to jointly respond to emergencies through concerted national efforts.

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