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ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan Workshop

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INSIGHT

Steps in Developing the AHA Centre Executive Programme

AHA CENTRE

ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management

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ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan Workshop

As the operational engine of ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), the AHA Centre is developing the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP).

As the ASEAN region is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, and with the increasing numbers of disaster occurrences and scale of immediate responses shown in the natural calamity, it is vital to develop a regional disaster response plan. Having a regional disaster response plan would allow ASEAN to improve the speed and volume of disaster relief and emergency responses, as well as enhance the effectiveness, appropriateness and timeliness of response to emergencies.

“When we talk about one ASEAN response, we are talking about speed, scale and solidarity,” said Mr. Said Faisal, Executive Director of the AHA Centre. “It’s basically how we can move faster, big enough and under the banner of ASEAN when handling disaster within the ASEAN region.”

The AJDRP will be designed to plan disaster response plan for large-scale disaster caused by several types of natural disasters, i.e. floods, earthquakes and tsunami, volcanic eruptions and tropical cyclones. The plan will also take into consideration key factors including:

- The government’s own disaster response plans and capacity;
- Coordination and capacity of national, regional or global inputs;
- The likelihood of disaster occurrence.

Objectives of the workshop were

1. To increase understanding on the AJDRP’s mechanism in humanitarian assistance and disaster response;
2. To raise awareness on the concept of a One ASEAN One Response, and its impact on how ASEAN will collectively respond to disasters within and outside of the region;
3. To strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States, AHA Centre, and other humanitarian actors on the development of the AJDRP;
4. To identify minimum level of assets and capacities for ASEAN response and its availability in the region;
5. To better coordinate and facilitate assistance, including distribution of relief assets and capacities among AMS and other humanitarian partners.

Key principles of the AJDRP

1. The disaster response planning involves identifying, organising and strengthening resources and capacities to reach a level of preparedness to ensure a fast, effective and collective response.
2. The elaboration on the development of the AJDRP is to ensure that appropriate and adequate arrangements are made in advance to minimise risks to disaster.
3. This arrangement will describe who will do what, as well as when, with what resources, and by what authority for before, during and immediately after an emergency.
4. This plan will depend on each of ASEAN Member State’s ability to support this agreement, on a voluntary basis to identify and earmark their available assets and capacities for disaster response, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected country.
5. The AJDRP is to support the affected country in which the affected country will take the leadership role.
6. The AHA Centre, with the support of the National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) of AMS will coordinate the development and execution.

“With our extensive experience in disaster response from Nargis to Haiyan, ASEAN has taken this further by seeking to institutionalize the resilience of the region, our communities and our peoples.”

The workshop was attended by 125 stakeholders around ASEAN disaster management and emergency response field including, representatives from ASEAN Member States, AHA Centre from 10 Asian countries: ASEA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Military / Defence, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Welfare, United Nations agencies represented by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), Civil Society Organisations represented by AADMER Partnership Group (APG) and AADMER-CSR Partnership Framework (ACPF), Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

During the keynote address, Mr. Wisnu Wijjaya, Deputy Minister for Prevention and Preparedness of the Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management offered three important messages to help participants of the workshop in developing the AJDRP.

1. It is important to anticipate the occurrence of disasters, such as earthquakes, by way of proactive measures, in order to reduce disaster losses when disaster strikes. Through the workshop, it is hoped that all parties can harness the strength of the relevant stakeholders and make a difference.
2. Understanding the importance of comprehensive preparedness, the time is here and now to discover how to reach and work together.
3. Each stakeholder are valuable partners who have the same goal, which is to join efforts in minimizing loss of lives and suffering, as well as reducing disaster losses when disaster strikes. Through the workshop, it is hoped that all parties can harness the strength of the relevant stakeholders and make a difference.

The AJDRP workshop was conducted as part of the AJDRP Project workplan, which was supported by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDP) grant provided by the Government of Japan, under the Joint Disaster Risk Reduction Plan (JDRP) Project, to develop the AJDRP as a regional disaster response plan for the AHA Centre with the capacity to support disaster management in the region, and to develop a regional disaster response plan for the AHA Centre with the capacity to support disaster management in the region and to develop an AJDRP for the AHA Centre with the capacity to support disaster management in the region.

To help develop the AJDRP, the AHA Centre recently conducted a regional workshop for the development of AJDRP on 23-24 February 2016, in Jakarta, Indonesia. “The lessons from our collective response to the recent mega disasters which hit the region such as Indonesian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 point to an urgent need for more prompt, larger scale and better-coordinated approach to emergency relief as well as capacities and assets to support and assist affected countries,” said His Excellency, Mr. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN during the opening remarks.
ASEAN-China Seminar on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

AHA Centre recently participated in the ASEAN-China Seminar on Disaster Management and Emergency Response in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Participants of the workshop included representatives from ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC), the Government of the People’s Republic of China, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

With a sub-theme of “Role of National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) in promoting Cooperation and Coordination and addressing Challenges and Recommendations”, the objective of the seminar was to explore potential cooperation between China and ASEAN Member States on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

Among the topics discussed was the implementation of the ASEAN-China Memorandum of Understanding on Disaster Management, which will not only benefit the NDMOs in ASEAN Member States but also the authorities in the sub-national level.

15th ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief

The 15th ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ARF-ISM) on DR recently took place in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 25-26 February 2016.

Over 100 participants targeted towards high-level delegates from the 27 ARF member countries and NDMOs of Malaysia, Japan, China, and other international organisations in disaster relief work discussed six main topics under the theme of “Building a Better Response”.

AHA Centre record shows that 26 out of 29 incidents were flood, flashflood and landslide incidents. These occurred mostly in Indonesia and Malaysia. Nearly half a million people were affected.

In the region, floods normally cover wide areas. In Indonesia, floods heavily affected Aceh, Riau, East Java and Bangka Belitung Provinces. In fact, floods and landslide occurred in 23 out of the 34 provinces of Indonesia. Thousands of houses and hectares of farmlands were reported inundated for days. Roads and bridges were damaged and electricity cut off in most of the affected areas. Some local governments had to declare a state of emergency to provide better emergency response and relief operations.

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Steps in Developing the AHA Centre Executive Programme

The AHA Centre Executive (ACE) Programme is a prestigious and innovative programme that aims to provide exposure and capacity building for disaster management professionals in the ASEAN region. The programme is targeted towards officers from the National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) of the 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS). In anticipation of the third batch of the ACE Programme, The Column spoke to Mrs. Rinir Haryani, ACE Programme Officer of the AHA Centre, to gain insight into the steps involved in actualising the six-month long dynamic programme.

Selection Process

The AHA Centre sends out invitation letters to NDMOs in all ten AMS in July with a specified Terms of Reference and list of requirements to select the best candidate. The requirements include fluency in English and a Master’s degree among many. The selection process, which is conducted by each respective NDMO, is approximately six months long.

Placement Process

After the selection process, each NDMO will provide AHA Centre with two candidate names. The AHA Centre will follow up by sending out acceptance letters to the candidate.

Administrative Process

This phase involves visa processing, and other administrative processes between the AHA Centre and each respective NDMO before the candidates fly out to Jakarta, Indonesia to commence the Programme.

Orientation and Familiarisation

The candidates’ arrival in Jakarta, Indonesia is usually on the first quarter of the year. During the first month, the activities and programmes are focused on orientation and familiarisation with Jakarta, the AHA Centre itself, as well as with colleagues. Trainings in the first month are generally focused on on-the-job training.

General Training

Modules that follow are then more focused on general training such as leadership trainings, United Nations training, and personality development among many.

Evaluation

As there needs to be continuous learning process in the disaster management field, an evaluation phase is vital to process the disaster management field. The evaluation phase is conducted through a 3-day workshop. The evaluation is generally focused on the candidate’s performance and knowledge. Other than this they also evaluate the implementation, which includes travel arrangements, facilitators of the training, and the hours dedicated to the training.

Graduation

The completion of the programme is then commemorated by inviting relevant stakeholders during the graduation ceremony.

How did you first come across the disaster management field?

I previously worked with the Royal Thai Government of the Kingdom of Thailand. In December 2004, when the Indian Ocean Tsunami hit, a significant part of Thailand was heavily affected, that was the first time I had a hands-on experience dealing directly with disaster. I became involved because there were many international assistance coming in, and I was part of the team assigned to receive these assistance from various organizations from other countries. That was my first encounter dealing with a disaster situation, but also that there was Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. My role in dealing with Cyclone Nargis was a little different as I was in charge of providing assistance. Through these events, I learned how important it was to be a humanitarian actor.

How did you join the AHA Centre?

After working for the Royal Thai Government, I worked for the International Organization/UN agency based in Bangkok because I wanted to get out of my comfort zone, which was to work for the national government. But then there was the ASEAN Economic Community started to form and I thought it would be an exciting period of time to work for the ASEAN-based organizations where I am also part of this integrated community. The AHA Centre had just started to form when Bangkok experienced one of its biggest floods in 2011. I became interested since then and was finally able to join the AHA Centre in 2013.

When was the first time you were deployed on to the field and what was that experience like?

The Indian Ocean Tsunami that affected Thailand was the first time being on the field on my capacity as a part of the Royal Thai Government of the Kingdom of Thailand. It was extremely saddening, there were so many dead bodies, but there was no time to absorb anything in because everybody was so busy. So many international assistance was coming in, and I was the focal point to ensure that the assistance we received from outside was put to good use.

What motivates you to stay in this field?

I want to learn. I like to learn. It’s not an easy task, but it’s rewarding. Despite all these challenges, you get to help people, buy them water, find them food, give them shelter when they need it most.

THE OTHER SIDE

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Saroj Srisai
DELSA Programme Coordinator of AHA Centre

With an extensive background working with national government and public sector, Mr. Saroj Srisai learned over time what it was to be a humanitarian actor. As AHA Centre’s DELSA Programme Coordinator, Mr. Saroj Srisai’s passion and ambition for the AHA Centre shines through as The Column spoke to him for this month’s The Other Side.

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THE OTHER SIDE

Having spent so much time working for government agencies and international / regional organisations, can you share us how important do you think it is for cooperation and collaboration to take place especially in the disaster management field?

You cannot easily predict disaster. We never know when it will strike. Coordination and collaboration needs to take place, not just in terms of resources but also efforts. One organization alone, or one country alone is not enough to respond to disasters. You need a concerted collaborative effort in such a manner that helps those affected and provide them with what they need. These efforts are not only needed among governments, but all the way down to civil societies and citizens.

Do you have any ambitions in terms of where you want to see the AHA Centre grow in the coming years?

I would like to see the AHA Centre become a platform for disaster management in the ASEAN region. I want to see it grow sustainably, and in a stable manner. I hope it can have more resources and more mandate to help ASEAN, and if we can, extend our knowledge and expertise to help other regions, this would be ideal.
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.

The AHA Centre is an inter-govermental 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.

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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