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Press Release

Regional conference on reforming international humanitarian aid to enhance local leadership

Jakarta, 27 August 2019 — On 27-28 August, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) hosted the first regional conference in the Asia-Pacific region on how to reform the international humanitarian aid sector so as to better promote the role of local actors in internationally-supported relief operations.

The conference was opened by His Excellency Dr. H. Muhammad Jusuf Kala, Vice President of Indonesia and Chairperson, Indonesia Red Cross Society (Palang Merah Indonesia). It was co-organised by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Government of Switzerland and gathered representatives from governments in the Asia-Pacific region, donor governments, as well as local and international humanitarian organisations from across the region.

“We believe that localisation can help bringing assistance closer and faster to the people on the ground, especially during emergencies. For localisation to work during emergencies, however, we need to establish a mechanism that is nationally-led, regionally enhanced, and internationally supported as necessary,” said Adelina Kamal, Executive Director of the AHA Centre.

The conference was organized on behalf of the “Localisation Workstream,” a network of major donors, UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations, local actors and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement that signed a “[Grand Bargain](#)” on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The intention is to support local and national responders and to promote more equitable partnerships in order to make emergency response more efficient and adapted to local context. IFRC and Switzerland act as the co-conveners of the Localisation Workstream.

“A localised approach to principled humanitarian action has many benefits,” observed Michael Cottier, Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Switzerland in Indonesia, “It improves local ownership and awareness of aid, promotes its relevance, and allows for a more inclusive response.”

“The goals of the international humanitarian aid sector are still the right ones,” said Jemilah Mahmood, IFRC Under-Secretary General for Partnerships, “we need to bring effective assistance to the people who need it as quickly as possible, in an impartial way. But we cannot achieve these goals if we keep investing only in international mechanisms. It is time to be transformative - to take on the real and perceived risks of a more locally-led approach.”

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