HIGHLIGHT
Supporting returning communities to Rakhine State

MONTHLY DISASTER OUTLOOK
Monthly Disaster Review and Outlook for May 2019

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AHA CENTRE
ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management

HI READERS,

Volume 51 of the AHA Centre’s Column brings us into the second half of 2019, with an array of interesting topics and articles from the ASEAN disaster management sector.

We kick things off with a look into the unique and complex situation of community repatriation in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, with this month’s Highlight article covering the support provided by the AHA Centre and ASEAN-ERAT to undertake needs assessments for returning communities.

The Insight section then provides us an interesting insight into the current and potential role of the AHA Centre as a regional knowledge hub on disaster management – one of the key strategic goals for the Centre to advance disaster management in ASEAN.

Our Other Side article this month focuses on the engaging story of Ms. Myat Moe Thwe – the Director for Coordination and Research Division in Myanmar’s Department of Disaster Management – and the personal experiences and interest that drew her to the disaster management sector.

We also learn more about the work undertaken between the AHA Centre and Temasek Foundation International in this Volume’s Partnership section.

Finally, in the AHA Centre Diary we learn more about a number of workshops that took place at the AHA Centre throughout the previous month, highlighting the knowledge gained by staff on fundraising, as well as the ongoing development of the ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination course.

We hope you find this month’s articles valuable and engaging, and feel further inspired to continue advancing disaster management within your country and the ASEAN region overall.

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The AHA Centre
The humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, Myanmar, is complex and protracted in nature, requiring ongoing support and partnerships to facilitate the repatriation of communities displaced during preceding years. After 60 days of discussions and planning, the AHA Centre was requested by the Government of Myanmar to assist its work in the repatriation process, resulting in the Centre and members of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) undertaking preliminary needs assessments with the Government of Myanmar during the early stages of 2019. On May 27, 2019, the ASEAN Secretariat-General and Myanmar’s Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation next to discuss the results of the needs assessments, and determine plans for implementation processes to enhance a safe, dignified and voluntary community repatriation to the region.

It was during the 52nd ASEAN Summit, held on 13 November 2018 in Singapore, that the Heads of State/Government from ASEAN Member States expressed their readiness to support Myanmar in its ongoing repatriation efforts. The ASEAN Leaders also welcomed the invitation extended by the Government of Myanmar to the AHA Centre to deploy a needs assessment team, tasked to identify possible areas of cooperation in Rakhine State in order to facilitate the repatriation process. A terms of reference was collaboratively developed by the Department of Disaster Management of Myanmar (DDM Myanmar), the AHA Centre and the ASEAN Secretariat, with the developed objective of the Preliminary Needs Assessment aimed to assess the readiness of Reception and Transit Centres, including potential repatriation sites, previously identified by the Government of Myanmar.

During March 2019, an ASEAN-ERAT team composed of ten members from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the AHA Centre and the ASEAN Secretariat, were deployed to Myanmar. The mission began with a preparedness training and planning workshop held in Nay Pyi Taw – jointly organised by the DDM Myanmar and the AHA Centre – and included a briefing on safety and security, team organisation and responsibilities, testing of communications procedures, and review of the repatriation plan and assessment tools. ASEAN-ERAT was supported by officials from DDM Myanmar, the AHA Secretariat, and two interpreters. The findings of the assessment and the Executive Summary of the report were then presented to the Director-General of DDM Myanmar and a briefing provided to the Secretary-General of ASEAN regarding the outcome of the Preliminary Needs Assessment.

“On behalf of the Government and the people of Myanmar, I am grateful to ASEAN for standing firmly with Myanmar, and for supporting repatriation through preliminary needs assessments. As one of our most trusted and cooperative partners, Myanmar looks forward to continuing working with ASEAN and continuing to strengthen our regional ties through these efforts.”

– Win Myat Aye, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation, Myanmar.
MONTHLY DISASTER REVIEW AND OUTLOOK

MAY 2019

GENERAL REVIEW OF MAY 2019

Only four disaster occurrences were recorded in the ASEAN region during the month of May 2019 – all of which are hydro-meteor-climatological in nature. While the number of disaster occurrences recorded was only around 27% compared to May’s previous five-year average, the number of reported affected people and damaged houses were significantly above average, as much as 61 and 37 times respectively. The results are due to the drought and other related effects of El Nino in the Philippines (for affected people), and the culmination of atmospheric disturbances that brought storms and a rain-induced landslide in Thailand (for damaged houses). The geographic extent of drought conditions saw widespread impact in the Philippines, with 10 of the 17 regions in the country reported to have been affected. This formed a key driver for high numbers of affected people. In the case of Thailand, heavy rainfall conditions throughout the country were influenced by the strengthening of the Southwest Monsoon, coupled by multiple low pressure cells. This resulted in continuous heavy rainfall which eventually overwhelmed soil water absorption capacity, thereby resulting in rain-induced landslides. The combination of storms and rain-induced landslides resulted in higher numbers of damaged houses.

Generally, there were no fatalities or significant damages directly caused by geophysical hazards during the month. Western earthquakes of magnitude 5.5 and above were recorded in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, while four volcanoes in Indonesia are still under increased monitoring. In addition, an eruptible Mt. Agung in Indonesia was reported during the month, with several areas affected by ash rain. Fortunately, most of the population are located outside the hazard zones, and no evacuations were triggered.

REGIONAL TALLY
MAY 2019

- Number of recorded significant disasters: 4
- Number of affected people: 1,078,946
- Number of internally displaced people: 5,767
- Number of damaged houses: 4,766
- Number of casualties: 1
- Number of injured people: 7
- Number of missing people: 5

Compared to the period of March 2018 to May 2018 average:
- Number of recorded significant disasters
- Number of affected people: 15
- Number of internally displaced people: 1,078,946
- Number of damaged houses: 4,766
- Number of casualties: 1
- Number of injured people: 7
- Number of missing people: 5

DISASTER COMPARISON IN NUMBERS

MAY 2019

The Southeast Monsoon is normally experienced by the ASEAN region during June. Traditionally, Southwest Monsoon results in the occurrence of droughts through the northern part of the region, while the southern parts experience a dry period. Meanwhile, the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre expects the borderline El Nino conditions in the regions, which have been observed since the last quarter of 2018, to continue until August 2019. Also, the Indian Ocean Dipole is expected to develop into its positive phase, with lower than average sea surface temperatures. As a result, while rainy conditions are expected across most of the regions, the amount of rainfall may potentially be below normal levels. There are, however, several areas that may experience weather that is not normal conditions, specifically Western and Southern Myanmar, and parts of Sumatra, Northern Sulawesi, Moluccas, and Papua in Indonesia. Finally, above-normal temperatures are expected in most of Central and Eastern Southeast Asia, including parts of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Central and Western Indonesia during the next 3 months.

SEASONAL OUTLOOK

As the Southeast Monsoon is predicted to be in full effect throughout the region across the next few weeks, the occurrence of tropical cyclones over the Bay of Bengal and Western Pacific is expected. This puts the Molucca sub-region and the Philippines in an additional risk. To support such anticipations, the AHA Centre is finalizing its preparations for the launch of the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELISA) Satellite Warehouses in the Philippines and in Thailand, that aims to improve the delivery of relief resources to Member States. For longer-term impact, the AHA Centre is partnering with the Pacific Disaster Center, aims to gain a deeper understanding of disaster risk for countries in the ASEAN region through the National Disaster Preparedness Baseline Assessment (NDBA). With a more detailed assessment, the NDBA is expected to identify specific risk elements for increased mitigation effort, to reduce increase resilience. The NDBA has been launched in Viet Nam, and has scheduled upcoming launches in Indonesia and the Philippines. Lastly, the AHA Centre will explore a new concept in Disaster Risk Reduction through the upcoming 3rd Asia Pacific Disaster Platform on Financial-based Financing (FbF). It is a programme that enables access to humanitarian funding for early action based on in-depth forecast information and risk analysis. The goal of FbF is to stimulate disaster preparedness, prevent impact (disasters), and reduce impacts on human populations.

DISCLAIMER

Disclaimer: AHA Centre’s estimation is based on data and information shared by National Disaster Management Organizations (NDMOs) and other relevant agencies from ASEAN Member States, international organizations, and news agencies. Further information on each recorded significant disaster, description, and detail of data and information are available at http://admr.centre.org/report.
THE AHA CENTRE AS THE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE HUB ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Enhancing disaster resilience in the region forms the ultimate objective of the AHA Centre as a regional disaster management knowledge hub. Knowledge will promote improved responses, as well as improved preparedness measures. Knowledge distilled from real experience is utilised to inform policy makers, as well as support affected community with the steps that need to be taken to prevent similar catastrophes from happening again. Promoting knowledge, therefore, is in-turn promoting disaster resilience.

The AHA Centre can play a number of crucial roles as a regional knowledge hub, including advocating for evidence-based policy making, promoting professionalism, supporting innovation around the region, managing a comprehensive database system, and sharing its experience in disaster management beyond the region.

Evidence-based policy ensures that policy development is based on actual, credible evidence. Evidence-based policy development approaches enable policy makers to make better strategic decisions, especially in the area of disaster management. The AHA Centre believes that this approach will help Member States in developing their resilience against disaster, as policy will be developed from tried and proven methods and actions. To advance this, the AHA Centre will partner with reputable universities and think tanks that can provide useful policy inputs to the governments of the ASEAN Member States based on reliable research.

Human resources are a critical component in overall disaster management, as they are the ones at the forefront, in the field, and directly in touch with affected communities. Developing capacity and professionalism for disaster workers will help enhance the quality of disaster response of Member States, as well as contribute positively to the overall disaster management system of the nation. To promote professionalism, the AHA Centre will work closely with a diverse range of partners - including universities, training institutions, and National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs) - to develop strong standards and capacity building activities.

The AHA Centre will also work to promote innovation in the management of disasters in the region. Innovation is the application of better solutions to existing challenges, and by promoting innovation in disaster management, the AHA Centre aims to encourage and facilitate the production of new ideas that will improve disaster mitigation and resilience in the region. New technologies form one of the main tools of innovation. However, innovation in disaster management not only includes technology, but also explores non-technological innovations, such as changing disaster structure mechanisms, improving processes, changing mind-sets and paradigms, building community resilience, and revising rules and regulations that can facilitate faster, more efficient, and more flexible emergency response operations.

As a knowledge hub, the AHA Centre also manages a comprehensive database system on disaster-related information in the region. Database management has long been identified as a key potential role for the AHA Centre as a knowledge hub. Under this role, the Centre collects diverse types of disaster information, including data on research, experts, disaster management professionals, and disaster management laws in the region among many others. By performing this role, the AHA Centre seeks to support the disaster community in the region by ensuring the availability of relevant information that can support decision-making processes, research initiatives, innovation, as well as partnership and networking between various stakeholders.

Finally, the AHA Centre should also work to share and disseminate ASEAN knowledge beyond the region. The Centre can disseminate ASEAN’s, as well as individual Member States’ knowledge, lessons and best practices across and beyond the ASEAN region, in line with the vision to develop ASEAN into a global leader on disaster management by 2025.
TEMASEK FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

A key goal of the AHA Centre is to strengthen its sustainability through engaging a range of partners and supporters across all of its working areas, and its recent engagement with Temasek Foundation International evidences the value that new and innovative partnerships can have for both the AHA Centre itself, as well as the communities of ASEAN who find themselves facing disaster.

Temasek Foundation supports a diverse range of programmes that uplift lives and advance communities in Singapore and beyond, to strengthen social resilience, foster international exchange and regional capabilities, and advance science and nature. These are made possible through non-profit philanthropic endowments gifted by Temasek, a global investment company headquartered in Singapore. It was during 2018 that — recognising the value and role of the AHA Centre’s work in the region — Temasek Foundation approached the Centre with the opportunity for a valuable partnership. Only a few months after that, the multiple disasters in Central Sulawesi provided a platform for the two organisations to join together on disaster response efforts, with Temasek Foundation offering direct material support for the communities of Central Sulawesi — facilitated and distributed through the AHA Centre’s broad network of responders in the field.

Temasek Foundation helped answer a critical water and sanitation need during the disaster response and recovery period, by providing 1,300 water filtration kits through the AHA Centre. The portable and disposable filtration kits — valued at USD 91,000 — had a filtration capacity of up to 2,500 litres, providing critical access to clean water for affected communities across the disaster-struck Indonesian province. Additionally, during 2018 Temasek Foundation International also held a nationwide fundraising campaign in Singapore to encourage public donations for non-profit organisations, of which the AHA Centre was a listed beneficiary and was donated SGD 5,000 as a result.

Aside from direct support opportunities, both parties also recognise the value in their aligned goals for capacity building — in this case related to disaster preparedness, as well as response. With their initial joint efforts proving the value and success in strategic activities, both organisations will explore further opportunities and activities that can support disaster management engagement in the region.
Fundraising can form an important method in ensuring funding diversity – therefore supporting overall sustainability – within operations of humanitarian organisations. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), one of the AHA Centre’s key working partners, holds a great array of experience in the field of fundraising, and undertook a workshop on the topic during May 2019. The initial idea was raised during meetings between the AHA Centre and an MSF delegation during mid-2018, as both parties explored options for support in the operationalisation of the One ASEAN, One Response declaration. The workshop concept was then further discussed with the AHA Centre in Geneva during the UN Humanitarian Partnership Week in February 2019, with the AHA Centre enthusiastically accepting the offer to learn from MSF’s experience.

Ms Jenny Tung, the Director of Development and Fundraising from MSF’s Hong Kong chapter lead the MSF delegation for implementing the workshop, and also facilitated the half-day event at the AHA Centre headquarters in Jakarta during May. A large number of AHA Centre staff participated in the workshop, which provided frank and open discussions resulting in a number of lessons, strategic ideas, and valuable insights for all involved. Alongside members of senior management, the AHA Centre’s Executive Director Ms Adelina Kamal also took part in the workshop, highlighting its strategic importance when she said, “the AHA Centre needs to re-think our financing and resource mobilisation strategy so that our operations can be self-sufficient and we will be able to help realise the ASEAN’s vision of becoming the future global leader on disaster management by the year 2025. We want to learn from the best, those who have done it successfully, like the MSF. We learnt from the MSF that the majority of their funds comes from diversified and unrestricted private individual funds, allowing MSF to have predictable and sustainable income and achieve operational flexibility, independence and impartiality. While the nature of the AHA Centre is different from MSF, we learnt so much from their financing strategy, and could use and modify it to suit our needs”.

Trust and confidence between disaster management practitioners and the defence sector is a key facet of furthering civil-military activities in disaster management. To continue the development of such important aspects, the AHA Centre is currently developing a strategic course for ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination. Named the ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination course, it will form part of the content offered through the AHA Centre’s ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) Advanced Level II Course.

In an effort to ensure relevant and appropriate content is developed and contextualised for the ASEAN region, experts from different organisations gathered for an ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Course Development Workshop, which was held on 7-9 May 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The workshop was facilitated by Jenny Lee—a technical advisor from RedR Australia—who is supporting the AHA Centre as a Senior Civil-Military Specialist with the task of developing this course.

Eleven organisations attended the workshop, including representatives from the Ministries of Defence from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand respectively, as well as a member of the Philippines Armed Forces. Representatives from the Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (HADRC/HRCC), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN World Food Programme (UN-WFP), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), RedR Australia, and Center for Excellence in Disaster Management (CFe-DM) in Hawaii also contributed to this Course Content Development Workshop. During the event, a range of ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination components and mechanisms were discussed and consolidated to form the overall course content and programme design. Alongside this, a trial table-top exercise was conducted to capture points for improvement and gaps to be filled. Resulting from the workshop’s success, a pilot ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination course is planned to be conducted on 8-11 July 2019 in Jakarta.
MS. MYAT MOE THWE

Ms. Myat Moe Thwe’s journey in the disaster management field is one of turning personal experience into passion and desire for advancement. As Director for Coordination and Research Division in Myanmar’s Department of Disaster Management, Ms. Moe is responsible for international cooperation and coordination on disaster preparedness, relief, response and recovery for the nation. Her busy schedule sees her coordinating between local and international disaster management organisations on the development and implementation of policy and guidelines, undertaking disaster risk management research, and also being Myanmar’s go-to person for the nation’s ever-expanding engagement in the regional One ASEAN One Response movement.

It was, however, a more personal reason that ignited Ms. Moe’s passion for all things disaster related. Experiencing the full brunt of Cyclone Nargis when it stormed through Myanmar in 2008 not only affected Ms. Moe directly, but also voluntarily participated in the emergency relief and response operations and family reunification programmes that took place in the days, weeks and months following the significant disaster. “The needs were so immense and broad at the time” Ms. Moe recalls, “but resources were very limited. There were very few organisations who could support early disaster relief, and even many of the responders ourselves were also victims of the disaster”. While providing whatever form of physical and emotional support she could, the engagement of numerous international disaster management organisations in the time following the disaster saw Ms. Moe involved in training and capacity building ‘on-the-ground’, that allowed her to learn more about what she had just been involved in, and learn lessons about disaster management on a daily basis.

“Experience is the best teacher – and learning from experience is the most important tool for individual development” says Ms. Moe.

“There were mistakes that I made during that very first experience due to the lack of knowledge and skill in dealing with disaster. However, this in turn drove my passion to learn more about disasters, and further pursue skills in disaster management.”

When taking about the present – and the future – for disaster management in Myanmar and the ASEAN region, Ms. Moe is quick to highlight the importance of technology to support improved preparedness and response for the communities. She identifies the important role of technology, and how it can support increases in human capacity for disaster management practices. “We have ideas and experience related to disaster management, but they need to be combined with technology for increased outreach and speed”, explains Ms. Moe. “By doing so, our valuable ideas can be transformed into technical tools for effective management” she continues. With this idea in the forefront of her mind, Ms. Moe led the development of a mobile application called Disaster Alert Notification. Ms. Moe explains that it is a simple yet useful example of utilising technology for communicating and disseminating information on disaster, allowing for an integrated and common platform through which people can obtain information easily and communicate in the face of disaster.

All innovation and technology aside, it is Ms. Moe’s humanitarian values and empathy that clearly form the base of all that she does. She states that “disaster teaches us to be more humane, humble, tolerant and resilient, and these are the kind of values that are so important even outside times of disaster”. Ms. Moe believes that these humanitarian ideals should be nurtured, and the collective strength that overcoming disaster requires should be continuously developed. She is also a strong believer in preparedness, saying that “disaster preparedness should be part of people’s everyday life, with education and awareness raising directing us to do the right things in the wake of disaster”. It is these values that Ms. Moe instils in herself throughout all facets of her work and life – reminding us that for disaster managers, work and life are often one and the same. “I seek to make my working environment feel like home, which means developing friendly relationships with my colleagues, and thinking of them as my family” she says. Ms. Moe emphasises the importance of mutual sharing and caring, and finished by reminding us all that “some external factors are out of our control, so we must accept this reality and make life more enjoyable for ourselves and others”.

Presenting research paper at the Nargis memorial event in 2010

As representative for Myanmar at the meeting of the Working Group on Recovery in Mandalay, Myanmar
ONE ASEAN ONE RESPONSE

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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 AHA Centre by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, witnessed by the ASEAN Heads of State / Government 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 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.

Supported by:

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