



“ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations”

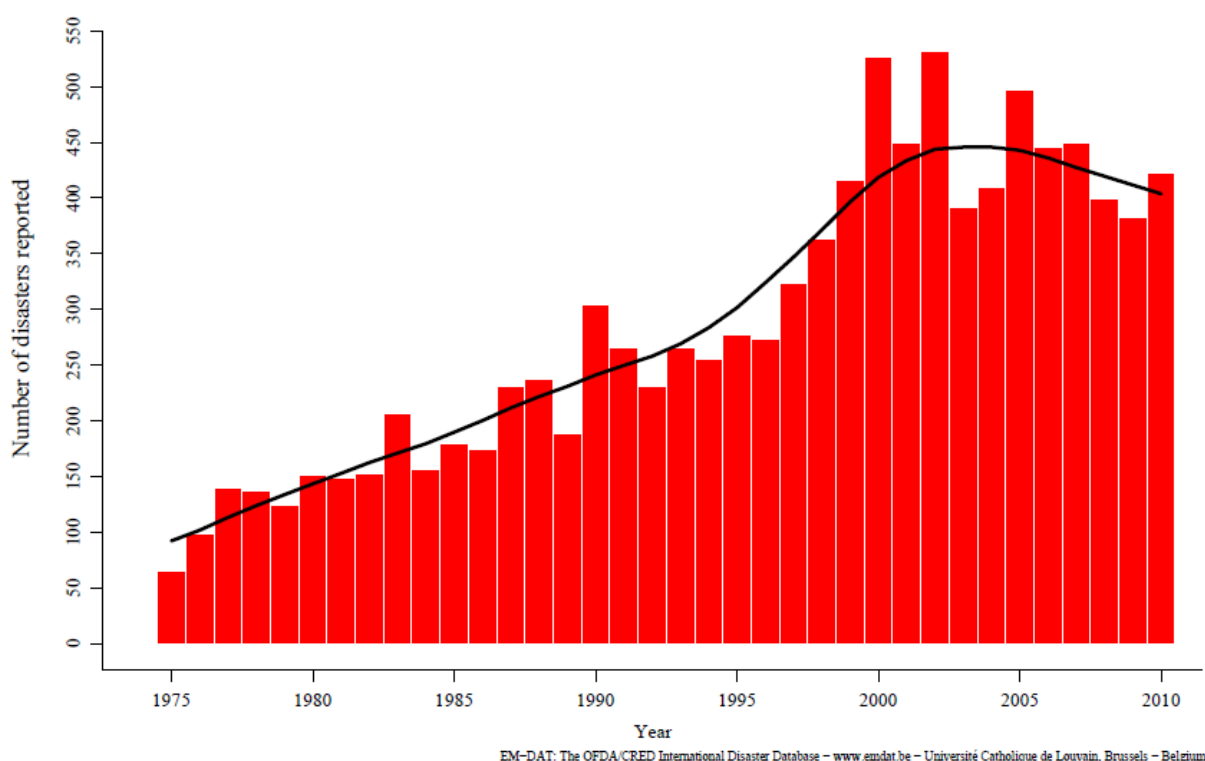
Indonesian-Australian Paper: A Practical Approach to Enhance Regional Cooperation on Disaster Rapid Response

Introduction: Natural Disasters a Constant Threat

1. Natural disasters continue to cause loss of life, properties and livelihoods in the region and impede sustainable development. Recent disasters such as earthquakes and tsunami, floods and volcanic eruptions, are a reminder that the region remains prone to disasters that have long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences.
2. Disaster management and response is a key priority for the East Asia Summit (EAS). This is clearly articulated in the 2009 Cha-am Hua Hin Statement on Disaster Management. Natural disasters have a profound human and economic cost for the countries in our region. Large populations are vulnerable to flooding, earthquakes or volcanic activity. Much of the region is prone to extreme weather events, including tropical cyclones, storm surges and forest fires.
3. EAS participating countries accounted for eight of the world’s ten deadliest disasters in 2009 and five of the ten in 2010. Smaller scale natural disasters resulted in scores of deaths and extensive damage to infrastructure, property and livelihoods, with developing countries bearing the bulk of the burden.
4. According to the UN’s Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2010, the number of disaster events reported globally increased from 1,690 to 3,886 between 1980-1989 and 1999-2009. Over the whole period 1980-2009, 45 per cent of these were in Asia and the Pacific.
 - a. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami cost the lives of over 250,000 people in the region, with 45.6 million people affected by the disaster.

- b. The 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, China, cost the lives of more than 69,000 people and caused US\$85 billion damage.
- c. The 2009 earthquake in Padang, West Sumatra, cost the lives of 1,100 people and caused the destruction of more than 300,000 buildings.
- d. The estimated cost of reconstruction after the recent earthquakes in New Zealand's Canterbury region is around US\$12 billion, 7.5 per cent of national GDP.
- e. In Japan, in addition to the tragic deaths of more than 15,000 people, estimates put direct losses from damage to housing, infrastructure and business caused by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami at up to US\$300 billion, making it the costliest disaster on record.

Natural disasters reported 1975 – 2010



The increase in reported incidents could be related to many factors including increasing population exposed to hazards and improvements in reporting and collection of disaster data (<http://www.unescap.org/idd/pubs/Asia-Pacific-Disaster-Report-2010.pdf>).

Responding to disasters on this scale and frequency stretches the resources of even the best-prepared countries. Recent experiences have shown that the

region could do more to build a substantive capacity for preparing for and managing disasters, including facilitating a rapid multilateral and cross-agency response capacity. The bulk of government-led international assistance in a given disaster situation is generally provided on a bilateral basis and in response to a specific request by the government of the affected country. The right to offer, invite, accept or refuse assistance in a disaster situation resides with national governments. But the EAS can provide direction, impetus and institutional support to a more cohesive, coordinated and effective regional disaster management and response effort.

Current Policy Responses

5. In response to such natural disasters, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and many other groupings and mechanisms have made arrangements on disaster mitigation and management a priority.
6. Complex and overlapping sub-national, national, regional and global arrangements for disaster preparedness, response and relief risk confounding efforts to build the region's disaster management and response capacity rather than assisting them.
7. The EAS itself has expressed its firm resolve to cooperate on reduction and management by adopting the 2009 Cha-am Hua Hin Statement on EAS Disaster Management. In addition, there is a range of agreements and arrangements under ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum and between ASEAN and various Dialogue Partners, namely the:
 - a. ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which seeks to reduce disaster losses and jointly respond to disaster emergencies through regional and international cooperation;
 - b. ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations;
 - c. ASEAN Declaration on Cooperation in Search and Rescue of Persons and Vessels in Distress at Sea;
 - d. Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance;
 - e. ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), which meets twice a year and ACDM+3 which meets once a year;
 - f. ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), which has established an Experts' Working Group on humanitarian assistance and

- disaster relief;
- g. ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which has a long-standing inter-sessional meeting process on disaster relief and has held desk-top and field exercises;
 - h. Asian Development Bank, which assists countries in reducing vulnerabilities to risk and responding faster to disaster impacts, including through grants to developing member countries affected by natural disasters; and
 - i. APEC's Emergency Preparedness Working Group, which seeks to improve the region's preparation for and response to emergencies and disasters by helping to reduce risk and building business and community resilience.
8. Despite the proliferation of such arrangements and agreements, a basic challenge remains: is the region now actually better prepared to respond to natural disasters in a rapid, timely and effective manner, especially in the immediate life-saving moments?

A Strengthened Role for the EAS

- 9. In recognition of the existing efforts, the objective in the context of the EAS is to simplify and improve existing arrangements to better prepare for and manage natural disasters and to rapidly and effectively respond in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster to maximize life saving efforts.
- 10. The aim is not to create another institution but to make existing institutional arrangements work effectively.
- 11. While significant progress has already been made, further work needs to be done by EAS participating countries, particularly through ASEAN mechanisms, to continue to enhance national preparedness, reduce risk, and build capacity for countries in the region to be able to: better self-manage disasters in their own territory; assist with responding to disasters elsewhere in the region; and better receive, coordinate and integrate international assistance when national capabilities are overwhelmed in a disaster situation.
- 12. Recent experience has highlighted three clusters of issues where gaps in regional readiness and response exist and in relation to which greater effort by EAS participating countries would have a positive effect, namely:
 - a. Cluster I – information-sharing;
 - b. Cluster II – overcoming bottlenecks; and
 - c. Cluster III – capacity building and promoting collaboration and

partnership in disaster response (interoperability).

13. It is proposed that the EAS consider focusing its disaster preparedness and response efforts around these three clusters.

Cluster I – Information-sharing

14. The Cha-am Hua Hin Statement highlighted the importance of establishing a network to provide timely and reliable information as well as rapid disaster response. Recent experience has served as a reminder that real-time information exchange in the immediate aftermath of disasters remains a particular challenge. For this reason, consideration should be given to developing and strengthening online AHA Centre information-sharing portal to disseminate information to EAS participating countries. The information-sharing portal would, among others, have three main functions:

- a. Real-time information

The portal would allow countries to share information on disasters in real-time. This information could include casualty and damage assessments, as well as initial response measures by the disaster-affected country. In addition, disaster impact information could also be provided by third countries, for example, through satellite images, with the consent of the affected country. This would inform the response planning of donors and allow faster communication than is possible through diplomatic channels.

- b. Resource matching

The portal would allow disaster-affected countries to list what resources, supplies and equipment they needed. If a donor supplied the requested resource, this would be recorded on the portal. This would avoid duplication of effort by donors.

- c. Other policy and operational gaps

Other issues that the portal could help address, but which would also need to be addressed collectively by EAS participating countries through other means, include:

- lack of comprehensive regional vulnerability and hazard mapping, coupled with inaccurate or insufficient resource gap analysis which can lead to inappropriate assistance being requested and/or offered;
- limited sharing of information or information-gathering and analysis capability and lack of a cohesive or agreed system to

ensure quick collection and exchange of data when a disaster occurs;

- limited on-the-ground coordination of international responses, including matching offers of assistance to requests and needs;
- international assistance that does not always support national disaster response priorities;
- specific capacity or capability gaps that vary by country and requirement, for example, in strategic airlift, urban search and rescue, advanced data collection and mapping; and
- the lack of a comprehensive understanding of what resources, assets and capabilities are available in the region to assist when required and what the key capability gaps are in a given country or region.

d. Outreach

With the consent of EAS participating countries, the portal could also serve as a source of information to various non-EAS entities including relevant international organizations and other non-governmental humanitarian disaster-relief agencies. The portal could enhance these relevant entities' rapid and effective involvement and participation in disaster relief efforts.

Cluster II – Overcoming bottlenecks

15. EAS participating countries have shown willingness to mobilise assets and capacities as appropriate in an effective and timely manner in response to disasters. There nevertheless remain a number of bottlenecks that impede the timely delivery of support. These include requirements related, but not limited to, licensing, visas, customs barriers, quarantine, taxation and privileges and immunities.
16. Consideration should be given to ways in which EAS participating countries could remove or minimise such bottlenecks.
17. EAS participating countries should consider mechanisms to allow rapid deployment and acceptance of assistance personnel and supplies, including through the development and use of voluntary model arrangements and/or binding bilateral agreements, taking into account the existing mechanisms in the region.

Cluster III – Capacity building and promoting collaboration and partnership in disaster response (interoperability)

18. Better management of and responses to regional disasters are impeded in part by:
 - a. varying institutional capacity to receive appropriate international assistance quickly when this is offered; and
 - b. varying capacity for international responders (government and non-government) to be trained and accredited to a certain standard and to be self-sufficient and self-contained once deployed to a disaster.
19. EAS participating countries should promote capacity building, including through disaster relief exercises, training, workshops and exchanges of staff and/or secondments, including in the cluster I and II areas as identified above.
20. Capacity building activities in the form of exercises can also be undertaken through existing mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) and ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx).

Way forward

21. Each EAS participating country shall designate a national focal point, or sherpa, in disaster rapid response preparedness, preferably the head of its disaster management agency.
22. The national focal point will take the lead for EAS country delegations which would meet twice a year or when it deems necessary in the form of an **expanded ASEAN Committee for Disaster Management** (the expanded ACDM).
23. The expanded ACDM would meet back-to-back with the ACDM and would report to East Asia Summit (EAS) leaders through the EAS SOM and EAS Foreign Ministers' Consultations.
 - a. In recognition of the new work to be undertaken and the importance of implementing leaders' decisions, the expanded ACDM would be supported by a secretarial unit attached to AHA Centre, to be funded by Australia, with contributions from other EAS participating countries on a voluntary basis.
 - b. The expanded ACDM would consult closely with the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian and Disaster relief and the ARF ISM on Disaster Relief.

24. In its first three years, the expanded ACDM would be guided by a work program based on the schema set out below.

Year 1 (2012)

25. Year one would focus on developing a work program and identifying necessary institutional reform options that would maximise coordination of existing regional disaster response mechanisms.
- a. The expanded ACDM would be established with responsibility for providing to leaders options for the best possible coordination of existing institutional arrangements.
 - b. Developing and strengthening online AHA Centre information-sharing portal to provide timely and reliable information as well as rapid disaster response
 - c. In developing options for leaders, the expanded ACDM would consider appropriate arrangements to allow rapid deployment and acceptance of personnel and supplies, including the development and use of voluntary model arrangements, binding bilateral agreements and/or the development of a regional arrangement to remove or minimise bottlenecks.
 - d. Based on input from the heads of EAS countries' disaster management agencies (HDMAs), the expanded ACDM would identify licensing, quarantine, customs, taxation and legal barriers which can prevent, impede or delay the implementation and repatriation of specialised equipment and capabilities (such as tents, specialised tools and sniffer dogs) and propose solutions.
 - e. HDMAs would establish and make available through the expanded ACDM/information portal a registry of national official requirements for rapid admission and accreditation of skilled professionals (law enforcement, medical) in a disaster situation.
 - f. HDMAs would also disseminate world's best practice systems and share lessons learned from recent disasters.

Year 2 (2013)

26. Activities in year two should focus on desk-top exercises covering a range of scenarios, including:
- a. flooding, seismic events or fire management or areas of sectoral expertise such as deceased victim identification, urban search and rescue,

medical, engineering, law enforcement

- i. identifying the full range of strengths and weaknesses of existing systems and capabilities; and
- ii. linking with ARF and ADMM-Plus exercises when they are held to help ensure these are effective and useful for strengthening regional response capacities.

27. Other year-two activities should include:

- a. Developing a register of disaster-relief assets, emergency stores and resources (including human resources) and niche capabilities that countries in the region are able to make available at short notice for disaster response;
- b. Identifying gaps in regional disaster response capacity; and
- c. Exploring or facilitating temporary exchanges of staff or secondments of staff between national disaster management organisations and/or emergency services.

Year 3 (2014)

28. EAS participating countries would look to full operational exercising of the new institutional arrangements and desk-top planning exercises put into place in years one and two in order to:

- a. strengthen regional rapid response capacity through increased operability of EAS disaster management capabilities; and
- b. simulate large-scale relief operations at (an) agreed venue(s) within the region.

29. Following large-scale field exercises, EAS participating countries would look to finalise new policy, institutional and operational arrangements.

- a. To enhance existing arrangements, including the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), to a more cohesive, coordinated and effective regional disaster management and response effort/preparedness.
- b. Agree to a schedule of desk-top and field-operational exercising into the future.