International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

ASEAN RATIONALE

Draft Letter/ Annual SE Asia RCRC Meeting/ June 2012

# Rationale for a Cooperation Framework between ASEAN & the Region’s NS

1. **The Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) and ASEAN**

There has been considerable effort over the past four years in relation to formalising a more strategic relationship between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and ASEAN. It is clear that there is interest from both ASEAN and SE Asian national societies and their IFRC secretariat to supplement the existing strong operational relationship. This short rationale paper pinpoints why formalising the draft cooperation framework between the IFRC and ASEAN.

At present ASEAN has mandated the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) to pursue regional cooperation on disaster management. ASEAN has also concluded a regional legal framework – the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) – which outlines the commitment of ASEAN member countries to respond jointly and more effectively, but also to reduce disaster risks in the ASEAN region. The AADMER provides a framework for the activities of the ACDM in addition to the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management (ARPDM) which outlines priority activities that contribute towards building disaster resilient nations. Taken collectively, it is clear that the national Red Cross Red Crescent societies of SE Asia have a unique and large role to play in this regional ambition to reduce vulnerability.

A brief look at what already has been achieved offers some optimism for future cooperation:

In the sector of disaster management and in close collaboration with ACDM, IFRC has worked for some years with ASEAN. In addition, national societies are often referenced to by their Governments in ASEAN forums. The IFRC is often invited to contribute expertise (such as on the Disaster Law, formerly known as IDRL initiative) attend workshops as a partner organisation to ASEAN. In so doing, IFRC has made several interventions and contributed to plenary and group discussions. In addition, IFRC is often requested to facilitate sessions and is given an opportunity along with other partner organisations to present on who we are, what we are doing, what has been previous engagements, particularly with ACDM and the AHA centre.

The Disaster Law initiative has been referred to during the development of ASEAN’s Standby Arrangement and Standard Operating Procedure (SASOP) following the AADMER. In testing out SASOP, ASEAN organises a yearly exercise (ARDEX) and the Disaster Law initiative serves as an active role as reference point.

ASEAN has acknowledged the need to review existing national and international legal instruments in mobilising resources, to take benefit from those that already exist before considering creating a new system. There are areas of possibility to be involved in the next phase of AADMER development with the development of legal frameworks as one priority.

Potential projects have at different occasions been discussed to support the development of national legal systems on such issues as cross border assistance and national frameworks to support AADMER.

Pre-existing relations between ASEAN and the Red Cross Red Crescent are strong and indeed growing. There is already engagement – both formal and informal – on the following issues:

* + Technical exchange and cooperation; including participation and support for each other’s training events (focused on response preparedness); exchange of training curriculum, guidelines and manuals (across the disaster management cycle); exchange / awareness raising of protocols and systems for response
  + Policy assistance; engagement in national policy, strategy and action plan development; input into national legislation processes through Disaster Law technical assistance; joint preparatory meetings for the International Red Cross Red Crescent Conference or other key events where national societies and governments are represented.
  + Programming; exploring the possibility and appropriateness of joint emergency assessments (with separate reporting lines); exchange of response plans and priorities as well as longer-term programming priorities and plans to strengthen links to the AHA centre; collaboration with local government in planning risk reduction strategies and actions; and exploring the potential for engaging in joint programme implementation in the areas of response preparedness, prevention and mitigation.

1. **The RCRC at a glance**

* National societies are auxiliary to government in the humanitarian sphere and as such are key partners who have resources to support national DM development and action. Protecting the independence of these national societies as humanitarian actors (both nationally and regionally) will enhance ASEAN’s ability to implement its AADMER. The RCRC is at its best when its emblem and ‘humanitarian space’ is protected; then it is in a position to project its full ‘humanitarian weight’ in support of vulnerable people.
* National societies are components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (in addition to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and IFRC) and are obliged, along with their governments, to respect the Statutes of the Movement and decisions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. National societies are additionally obliged to respect decisions of the Council of Delegates, the IFRC’s General Assembly and other statutory bodies.
* National societies are not government resources available to be used at their direction. Rather they are independent, impartial, neutral, volunteer based national entities who complement government resources. This relationship has proved to benefit both governments and national societies and most importantly vulnerable people over the last 150 or so years.
* In line with the first Geneva Convention, national society medical personnel may at the request of their government be incorporated into military medical corps that are deployed internationally.
* When working internationally, outside of military medical corps, the national society must receive the permission of the receiving national society to work in that country.
* National societies will coordinate the implementation of their preparedness, mitigation and response actions with their government.

1. **RCRC disaster management competence**

The RCRC:

* Has expertise in disaster response; early warning early action; community level programming; community level risk assessment; climate change adaptation; disaster law (IDRL) issues; pandemic preparedness; public education and awareness; and curriculum/manual/guideline development.
* Has technical skills in sustainable practices and tools that engaging with different groups, i.e. youth, adults, men women; formal and informal systems.
* Has established training approaches, curriculum, manuals and guidelines.
* Is the co-convener of the Emergency Shelter cluster IFRC is able to support national governments in developing capacities in emergency shelter preparedness, appropriate relief and recovery interventions and coordination.
* Offers an alternative perspective to humanitarian issues as a 3rd distinct pillar in humanitarian response i.e. Governments; UN/NGOs; International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

1. **RCRC disaster management capacity**

The RCRC:

* Is in possession of skilled staff and volunteers who are able to support national capacity building activities
* Through its national societies comprises national networks of branches and volunteers which are able to facilitate information exchange from local to national and national to local, supporting monitoring of vulnerabilities and communication of changes in the natural equilibrium.
* through national society branch and volunteer networks is able to work effectively with communities to create awareness and capture and promote indigenous knowledge
* Has national society staff and volunteers who are available as additional team members on government teams and or interagency teams (note this is different to governments directing national society teams).
* Is able to offer services in the area of restoring family links and management of dead bodies.

1. **RCRC disaster management collaboration**

The RCRC:

* Participates on national and regional coordination mechanisms for response and risk reduction.
* Collaborates with local government in planning risk reduction strategies and actions.
* Exchanges response plans and priorities as well as longer-term programming priorities and plans (with possible links to the AHA centre)
* Engages in joint programme implementation in the areas of response preparedness, prevention and mitigation.
* Has reciprocal representation with ASEAN at ACDM and the RCRC Southeast Asia Regional Disaster Management Committee (RDMC) meetings.

1. **What the future could look like via strengthened IFRC and ASEAN cooperation**
2. **Response and Recovery**

* Strengthened coordination and cooperation of efforts through sharing of operation plans and implementation achievements.
* Agreement of common relief and recovery parameters in response operations.
* Increased exchange of information during operations i.e. assessment data, security.
* Well managed exchange of national staff and volunteers as additional team members on government teams and or interagency teams (NB not a case of governmetns directing national society teams).
* Consistent cooperation in the area of restoring family links and dead body management.
* A defined and regular link to the AHA centre for information and updates on national society actions and offers of assistance from sister national societies in times of disaster.

1. **Response preparedness**

* Enhancing skills of national response teams.
  + Standardisation of training curriculum (i.e. reviewing IFRC’s national disaster response team training curriculum).
  + Exchange of facilitators for national society and government trainings.
  + Joint simulation exercises between national societies and government teams.
* Disaster Response and Contingency Planning.
  + Clear identification of national society role in national plans.
  + National society plans to build further on role outlined in national plans.
  + Exchange of facilitators / representatives in planning events.
  + Agreement on common relief and recovery standards.
  + The sharing of guidelines and formats.
  + Exchange of best practice in areas such as assessment, recovery programming (i.e. cash).
* Pandemic preparedness.
  + Clear identification of national society role in national plans.
  + Standardisation of training curriculum and preparedness planning.
  + Sharing of guidelines and formats.
  + Exchange of facilitators for national society and government training.
  + Joint simulation exercises between national society and government teams.
* Access to international tools and offers of assistance from sister national societies, including regional disaster response team (RDRT), field assessment & coordination team (FACT), & emergency response units (ERU).

1. **Legal preparedness**
   * Possibility to conduct joint legal preparedness assessments
   * Encourage the integration of the Disaster Law guidelines and AADMER into national laws and policies.
   * Exchange information and provide technical assistance on Disaster Law issues
   * Co-host trainings, workshops and forums on legal preparedness for disaster and communicable disease control.
2. **Prevention & Mitigation**

* Early Warning
  + National societies through their branch and volunteer networks are able to work effectively with communities to create awareness and link into national early warning systems.
  + National society branch and volunteer networks are able to convey early warning messages.
  + Technical inputs are able to be made into early warning messages, systems and processes.
  + The possibility of the holding of joint simulation exercises.
* Community based programming.
  + The possibility of offering technical practices developed by national societies and methodologies of working with vulnerable communities, that address disaster risks and implementing of prevention and mitigation actions.
  + Increased opportunity to share experiences of incorporating climate change adaptation into approaches to reduce vulnerability.
  + The possibility of an exchange of services (human resources, technical resources etc) to develop resilient communities.
  + Increased opportunity to ensure programmes are linked in with local government development planning.
  + Increased opportunity to share guidelines and formats.
* Urban based programming.
  + Ability to work collaboratively on developing technical approaches.
  + The possibility to an exchange of services (human resources, technical resources etc) to develop resilient urban communities.
  + Increased opportunity to ensure programmess are linked in with local government development planning.
  + Increased opportunity to share guidelines and formats.
* Climate Change Adaptation
  + Increased sharing of technical expertise through links to the RCRC climate centre
  + Better public awareness, education and engagement with communities
  + Increase the capture and promotion of indigenous knowledge
* Public Awareness and Education
* National societies through their branch and volunteer networks work effectively with communities to increase awareness and capture and promote indigenous knowledge.
* Technical skills in developing curriculum and practices for raising awareness are shared.
* Technical skills in sustainable practices and tools that engaging with different groups, i.e. youth, adults, men women; formal and informal education systems are shared.

1. **Disaster risk identification**

* National societies make available their valuable experience in risk assessment and identification for disaster response and disaster risk reduction programmes.
* National societies networks of branches and volunteers facilitate information exchange from local to national and national to local in support of the monitoring of vulnerabilities and communication of trends.
* IFRC experience and tools are available for reference.

1. **Capacity Building**

* Exchanges of training approaches, curriculum, manuals and guidelines.
* Having skilled staff and volunteers who are able to support national capacity building activities.
* Having shared expertise in disaster response and community level programming.
* Having shared expertise in climate change adaptation.

1. **Coordination and cooperation**

* Participation on national and regional coordination mechanisms for response and risk reduction.
* Work with local government in planning risk reduction strategies and actions.
* Sharing of information on response plans and priorities as well as longer-term programming priorities and plans.
* Engagement in joint programme implementation in the areas of response preparedness, prevention and mitigation.
* Reciprocal representation at ACDM and the RCRC Southeast Asia Regional Disaster Management Committee (RDMC) meetings.
* An ability to to advise on appropriate humanitarian response interventions to meet needs in times of natural disaster.
* An ability to offer an alternative perspective to humanitarian issues as the 3rd pillar in humanitarian response i.e. Gov; UN/NGOs; International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.
* A key resource in the interpretation and implementation of Disaster Law guidelines.
* As co-convener of the emergency shelter cluster IFRC can support national governments to develop capacities in emergency shelter preparedness, appropriate relief and recovery interventions and coordination.