



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Mr Surin Pitsuwan
Secretary General
ASEAN Secretariat
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Jakarta 12110 - Indonesia

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Ref: Cooperation Framework between ASEAN & the IFRC

Dear Sir,

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 societies¹ and their IFRC secretariat to supplement the existing strong operational relationship.

A Cooperation Framework was drafted under the guidance, following the observations provided by the ASEAN Secretariat and is now submitted to your Secretariat for final comment, looking forward to take the opportunity of the ASEAN Summit later this year in Cambodia to sign and officialise this important and promising partnership.

In disaster management and in collaboration with ACDM, IFRC has worked for some years with ASEAN. 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 an ASEAN partner. 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 SASOP, the yearly exercise (ARDEX) serves as a reference point. ASEAN has acknowledged the need to review existing national and international legal instruments. There are possibilities to be involved in the next phase of AADMER with the development of legal frameworks as one priority.

Pre-existing relations between ASEAN and the Red Cross Red Crescent are strong and indeed growing. There is already constructive and promising 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: 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; 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.

National societies are auxiliary to government in the humanitarian sphere and are key partners who have resources to support national DM development and action. Protecting the independence of these national societies (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 part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and are obliged, along with their governments, to respect the Statutes of the Movement and decisions of the International Conference of the Red Cross

¹ The South East Asia IFRC Office works and support the Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, Singapore and Vietnam



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and Red Crescent Movement. National societies are independent, impartial, neutral, volunteer based national entities who complement government resources. This relationship has benefited both governments and national societies and most importantly vulnerable people over the last 150 or so years. National societies will coordinate the implementation of their preparedness, mitigation and response actions with their government.

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. It offers technical skills in sustainable practices and tools that engaging with different groups, (i.e. youth, adults, men, women; formal and informal systems) and has established training approaches, curriculum, manuals and guidelines. The IFRC is the co-convenor of the emergency shelter cluster, supporting national governments in developing capacities in emergency shelter preparedness, appropriate relief and recovery interventions and coordination. It 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.

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.

An IFRC and ASEAN stronger cooperation is considered in the following disaster management areas:

Response and Recovery: (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 governments directing national society teams).

Response preparedness: (Enhancing national response teams; disaster response and contingency planning; pandemic preparedness; Access to international tools and offers of assistance from sister national societies, including regional disaster response team, field assessment & coordination team & emergency response units).

Legal preparedness: encouraging the integration of the Disaster Law guidelines and AADMER into national laws.

Prevention & mitigation / disaster risk identification (early warning; community based programming; urban based programming; climate change adaptation; public awareness and education)

Capacity building (Exchanges of training approaches, curriculum, manuals and guidelines; skilled staff and volunteers able to support national capacity building activities; expertise in disaster response and community level programming; expertise in climate change adaptation).

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; ability to offer an alternative perspective to humanitarian issues as the 3rd pillar in humanitarian response i.e. Government; UN/NGOs; International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement; A key resource in the interpretation and implementation of Disaster Law guidelines.

We look forward to your prompt feedback on this Cooperation Framework. Should you need any clarification or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With best regards

Anne E. LECLERC

Head, South East Asia
International Federation of Red Cross and Red
Crescent Societies



Cc: Mrs Adelina Kamal, Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division, ASEAN Secretariat
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