**IFRC Southeast Asia Pandemic and**

**Public Health Emergencies Preparedness Workshop**

**17-20 November 2014, Singapore**

**Workshop Brief Report**

**Executive summary**

Leaders of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in Southeast Asia acknowledged the importance of emerging pandemic threats. They agree for National Societies to strengthen capacities to help prevent and mitigate the potential impacts of these threats to vulnerable communities, and for International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to strengthen regional cooperation and resource sharing in key areas. Southeast Asia RCRC Leadership meeting, 2014, recommended to organize regional Pandemic and Public Health Emergencies Workshop. Following the recommendation of SEA RCRC Leader, meeting of Regional CSR Forum-consisting of head of Health and DM of National Societies from the region along with SEA OD steering committee- outlined the agenda and concept paper for the workshop with support from IFRC/AP Zone and SEARD. The four days’ workshop was organized with the great support from Singapore Red Cross Society which has proactively co-financed and provided logistics supports.

A status survey for pandemic and public health emergency preparedness and response systems and technical capacities was conducted among National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies prior to the workshop. The details and analysis is attached in **Annex : 1.**

The workshop saw the participation of 30 participants from Health and/or Disaster management division of nine national societies of Southeast Asia. In addition, there were participations from the ASEAN Secretariat, ADB, ICRC, and Academia. The IFRC Southeast Asia Regional Delegation and Asia Pacific Zone Office facilitated the event. The workshop included presentations from subject matter experts, regional governments’ ministry of health, National Societies, IFRC SEARD and AP Zone Office, ASEAN Secretariat, and ADB.

National Societies from nine countries, with support from the government representatives and partners, engaged in focus group discussions guided by a worst-case pandemic scenario. The exercises generated key National Society Actions to pandemic Impacts, and the 4Ws (What, When, Where and who) were identified for several of the actions for contingency plan development. National Societies formulated their Way Forward for the completion of their plans and capacity building. In addition, regional areas of cooperation within IFRC and with partners, such as ASEAN were identified, with the corresponding action elements being indicated in a Draft IFRC Roadmap for regional cooperation on pandemic and PHE preparedness.

The representative from ASEAN (Health sector) presented the main strategic directions of health in ASEAN and emphasized that 2015 and 2016 would be crucial years to discuss planning ahead, including joint initiatives in which Red Cross Red Crescent Societies – hand in hand with their respective ministries – could play a role for a safer ASEAN.

Following are the **key outcomes** of the workshop:

* National Societies drafted their Plan of Action for developing their respective contingency plans and SOPs, and conducting their table-top exercises to test their plans by 2016. This will be supported by IFRC secretariat. **Annex :2.**
* An IFRC Roadmap for enhanced regional cooperation among National Societies, and IFRC with ASEAN and other regional partners on pandemic and PHE preparedness was developed. **Annex: 3**. Group has prioritized the activities, which are mentioned at the bottom of Annex: 3.
* Potential entry points of IFRC to closer cooperation with ASEAN were identified for consideration by IFRC. **Annex :4.**
* Singapore Red Cross has agreed to organize the workshop on business continuity planning (BCP) and contingency planning for National Societies next year along with Secretariat.

The participants also came up with following ideas and agreed to bring up with leaders for their support as their recommendations. The **recommendations** are:

* Each NS in SEA should identify a Pandemic and PHE focal point at headquarter level as well as branch level, so regular information sharing can be established within National Societies and across the region as well. This will be kept NSs in better position in the specific country context. Pandemic and PHE should be one of the regular agenda of Regional Community Safety and Resilience Forum(RCSRF)- so the concept of information sharing and learnings among the focal persons within the National Societies and across the region will be continuously enhanced.
* Business continuity plan(BCP) and contingency plan are the important tools to deal the pandemic and PHE. Group has recommended to develop the contingency plan and BCP at every National Societies by end of 2016.
* It is also recommended to define the scenarios for SEA RCRC leaders as part of “alert mechanism” within the movement regarding pandemic and PHE- which can help to outline the plan of actions in advance for response.

 These recommendations will be presented to the SEA RCRC leaders meeting to be held in Cambodia in February 2015.

**Way Forward**

* National Societies should consider the worst-case pandemic scenario and the potential health and non-health impacts that could bring about humanitarian issues that National Societies could be in a position to provide their support. This may require a review of National Societies mandates and capacities, in relation to national authorities’ capacities. Areas such as **risk reduction, continuity of essential services in the light of community resilience should be considered**. National Societies should devote planning efforts in coming up with their Business Continuity Plan, Contingency plan and related SoP. National Societies that already have existing frameworks and have advanced with their planning and capacity building could serve as examples to others, and their good practices should be shared to their National Society peers.
* At the regional platform, IFRC should support/guide the National Societies to accomplish their planning targets, and encourage the sharing of good practices. The aim is for all National Societies to be at the same level of pandemic/PHE preparedness, within the shortest time possible. Thus, it is important to establish a common understanding on the process: How and when would the National Societies meet their targets? When should key regional meetings for exchanges be held? Which priority areas and functions should National Societies attend to in the short term? Building the relationship with ASEAN is a key step to be accomplished soon- thus, attempts to connect with the country focal points and liaise with the ASEAN Secretariat on key ASEAN action lines/activities should be initiated.
* Efforts to integrate the health and disaster management arena should be systematically approached both at national levels (working with authorities on health and disaster), and at regional level (working with relevant health and disaster management bodies- e.g. Health Senior Officials, ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), ASEAN Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (AWGPPR), ASEAN Expert Group on Communicable Diseases (AEGCD), the AHA Center, etc.)