

# Supporting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to build community resilience in Member States



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## Disasters in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Each year, the region experiences disasters that include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and extreme weather events such as typhoons, floods and drought. Given the high risk of disasters in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, and the limited existing frameworks for addressing vulnerabilities at many levels, it is important that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) and ASEAN country National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies engage with ASEAN in an increasingly strategic manner.

## The importance of ASEAN in disaster management

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is increasingly taking the leading role on disaster management in the region. In 2010, a legally binding agreement on disaster

management – the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management (AADMER) – came into effect, and is led by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster management (ACDM) with support from the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre).

*“The Red Cross is an important element of One ASEAN One Response. National Society presence enables us to achieve the Speed, Scale and Solidarity that we commit to. They are an asset for us”.*

Adelina Kamal, Deputy Executive Director of the AHA Centre.

## IFRC and ASEAN – a strategic partnership

IFRC aims to contribute to ASEAN goals of reducing the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable communities in Southeast Asia through ongoing technical cooperation with ASEAN stakeholders. This is pursued at two levels: in ASEAN countries, where National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are supported to engage with National Disaster Management Offices (NDMO) and other relevant authorities on development of policies, strategies and tools; and at a regional level with the ASEAN Secretariat, the ACDM technical working groups, the AHA Centre, and related key stakeholders.

IFRC works with the eleven National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the region: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Viet Nam, and Timor Lesté. **A key component of IFRC work is strengthening the skills and capacities of National Societies so they can advocate more effectively at national and regional levels for communities at risk.** Strengthening cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat and building regional partnerships complement this approach. A key aspect of IFRC's work is its partnership with the AHA Centre and its contribution to the *One ASEAN One Response*.

## The unique contribution of Red Cross Red Crescent

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the ASEAN region are grounded in their communities through their **one million volunteers and 4 million youth**. Their reach and auxiliary role to government in their respective countries gives them the mandate to support the most vulnerable in their communities, as well as the ability to access populations that other organizations are not able to reach. Each National Societies' auxiliary role is recognised through law or relevant decree, meaning they are both mandated and well positioned to support their National Disaster Management Offices and local authorities in disaster related issues.

IFRC as an international organization has a presence and active reach at global, regional, national, local and community-based levels; and with both IFRC and ASEAN being membership-based organisations, this ensures strong and effective working relationships at



both national and local levels and provides strong opportunities for alignment of policies and practices, shared learning and joint initiatives for the benefit of building more resilient communities across ASEAN countries. This comparative partnership advantage is already well understood by ASEAN Member States and is strongly reflected in the AADMER Work Programme 2016-2020. A key added value of the Red Cross Red Crescent is that it has the ability to operationalize AADMER through its wide network across ASEAN countries, and to scale-up initiatives and structured disaster response mechanisms that reinforce the AHA Centre's action.

The Red Cross Red Crescent also pursues humanitarian diplomacy with its ASEAN counterparts at both regional and national levels, the aim being to ensure that proposed policies and plans are inclusive of the needs of most vulnerable populations. IFRC is committed to ensure that all women, men, girls and boys, irrespective of age, disability, health status, social, religious, migrant or ethnic group are protected before, during and after disasters. Having effective gender and diversity strategies and approaches in place ensures that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and ASEAN countries reach the most vulnerable populations.

IFRC also provides technical assistance and capacity building to both National Societies and their governments to promote the inclusion of risk reduction concepts and best practices in related laws and regulations that are under development or review across ASEAN countries. IFRC strengthens National Societies' knowledge of disaster law themes (including International Disaster Response Law - IDRL - and Disaster Risk Reduction legislation) helping them to contribute to high level law and policy making processes and thereby enhancing their auxiliary role to government.

In Sendai, it was recognized that although there has been good progress in development of disaster risk management governance frameworks, there is still a lack of local level implementation and a lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities at the community level, and the IFRC is committed to working with ASEAN to ensure the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction is implemented - promoting a 'whole of society approach' to disaster risk management.

## IFRC support to the implementation of the AADMER Work Plan

IFRC's support to ASEAN is strongly illustrated in the contributions it makes to the AADMER work programme 2016–2020. Select contributions to the priority programmes include:

 **BUILD SAFELY:** Building Safe ASEAN Infrastructures and Essential Services: as a founding member of the Asia Pacific Coalition on School Safety, the Red Cross Red Crescent has pledged to harmonize existing tools for school safety at the national and regional level. The IFRC plays a role in the ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative (ASSI) and with National Societies actively cooperates with the ASSI, taking part in consultative processes led by ASEAN Member States and interacting with key technical partners under the Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety (APCSS); an engagement that led to co-sponsorship of the ASEAN Conference on School Safety in Bangkok in February 2017. In addition, ten National Societies in ASEAN conduct activities in schools through their network of volunteers and active youth members. National Societies are also active in urban resilience initiatives, implementing innovative projects in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, and Viet Nam.

 **PROTECT:** Protecting Economic and Social Gains of ASEAN Community Integration through Risk Transfer and Social Protection. Through its gender and diversity work, IFRC is committed to ensuring that all women, men, girls and boys are protected before, during and after disasters.



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 **RESPOND AS ONE:** Transforming Mechanisms for ASEAN's Leadership in Response: in each country, National Societies are part of the national response mechanisms led by the National Disaster Management Offices, contributing to contingency plans, response teams and standard operating procedures. IFRC and National Societies are also stakeholders in the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP) that is currently under formulation.

 **EQUIP:** Enhanced Capacities for One ASEAN One Response - Disaster Emergency Logistics System of ASEAN (DELSA): the IFRC and National Societies maintain a network of warehouses at global, regional, national and local levels. IFRC shares its logistics expertise as part of the AHA Centre Executive (ACE) Programme, and National Societies are part of the IFRC Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) and support each other in times of emergencies. Following the Myanmar floods in August 2015 and earthquake in Indonesia in December 2016, Indonesian Red Cross staff members were deployed as ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) members.

 **LEAD:** ASEAN Leadership for Excellence and Innovation in Disaster Management: the Regional Resilience Initiative (RRI) is a key contributor to the AHA Centre Executive Programme, providing the induction training, visits to community-based activities and peer-to-peer learning with National Society members for ASEAN stakeholders. IFRC also hosts the Knowledge and Information Management resilience library which showcases resources on disaster risk reduction, as well as health and cross-cutting issues such as gender and diversity, youth and volunteers, disaster law and migration from all ASEAN countries.

## Celebrating success with ASEAN

Each year, as part of regional and national advocacy between ASEAN, national authorities and the Red Cross Red Crescent, the IFRC and National Societies conduct joint celebrations on ASEAN Day for Disaster Management and the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction. In 2015, IFRC launched its *One Billion Coalition for Resilience* (1BC) as an invitation for enhanced partnerships towards community resilience, and discussions are underway with ASEAN to explore the possibility of launching the 1BC together in Southeast Asia.



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## Moving forward

The coming period presents a significant and challenging time for the IFRC's ongoing work with ASEAN. There is a need to support ASEAN countries to have effective disaster laws, which is crucial for supporting vulnerable populations in times of disaster and non-disaster. There is also a need to ensure that issues related to gender and diversity as well as sexual and gender based violence are recognised and effectively addressed, not just in the Red Cross Red Crescent supported programmes, but including those of ASEAN partners. And there is a need to engage with ASEAN more strategically, and to scale up on relevant areas of expertise.

### In the immediate period, the IFRC will aim to:

- Identify new strategic orientations for IFRC-ASEAN cooperation based on the current AADMER work programme
- Establish improved working modalities with the AHA Centre under the framework of the One ASEAN One Response
- Deepen the IFRC engagement in the ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative
- Initiate sexual and gender based violence research in select countries
- Invest in knowledge sharing and knowledge management with the AHA Centre
- Enlarge the base of disaster law experts and resources within ASEAN to promote peer-to-peer learning and support among Member States and partners.



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***“Having National Societies part of One ASEAN One Response is critical for achieving our vision. The National Societies are auxiliary to government and have grass roots networks with the widest coverage. As a Community we can collectively respond to disaster needs using our collective strengths and respond effectively.”***

Adelina Kamal, Acting Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director, AHA Centre



For more detail on the information contained in this publication, please contact:

**Hervé Gazeau**  
Disaster Risk Reduction Project Manager  
herve.gazeau@ifrc.org

**Marwan Jilani**  
Head of Country Cluster Support Team  
IFRC Bangkok  
marwan.jilani@ifrc.org  
www.ifrc.org

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