

Opening Comments for RRI Lessons Learned Workshop:

Deborah Cote, February 20, 2018

What a pleasure and privilege it is to be here with you and over the next three days to discuss intensively one of my favourite topics – the Regional Resilience Initiative – better known as RRI.

Warmest welcome to all the workshop's participants, who have come from near and far, and have taken the time in your very busy schedules, to focus on the lessons we can learn from our engagement with RRI. Amongst our esteemed participants are representatives from key regional partners, National Disaster Management Offices from Southeast Asia Governments, ASEAN, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, IFRC, the Canadian Red Cross, and Global Affairs Canada to who we are so grateful, for their generous financial support to RRI.

At the core of the Regional Resilience Initiative is the objective of enhancing peoples' resilience. By resilience we are referring to, and I quote the RCRC definition: "the ability of individuals, communities, organizations or countries exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, prepare for, reduce the impact of, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects."

This definition recognizes that resilience can be strengthened at multiple levels: at the individual, household and community levels, where women, men, boys and girls, have the abilities to adapt to new situations and improve their lives. Resilience can also be strengthened at the local and national government levels, where resilience at these levels deal with policy, social protection systems, infrastructure, laws and governance issues and can profoundly impact community resilience.

Lastly, resilience can be strengthened at the regional and global levels: where the impacts of disasters, violence and insecurity; hunger; mass migration; economic recession and prosperity; pandemics; pollution and climate change; all offer examples of the inter-connectedness of the levels and how actions at one level can negatively or positively impact the other levels.

It is within this resilience framework that RRI has worked to strengthen resiliency in Southeast Asia with the overarching goal of reducing the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable communities. Specifically, the Initiative has sought, to enhance skills and capacities within the eleven National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Southeast Asia, and to build their recognition as trusted partners and auxiliaries to their governments in humanitarian and development work. This has been complemented by the strengthening of regional partnerships, both within Red Cross Red Crescent networks and with key regional partners such as ASEAN.

In my capacity as Program Manager Asia for the Canadian Red Cross, I have had the privilege, as have many of you, of working with RRI and its brilliant team since the project's implementation planning days back in 2014. Over the years there have been many achievements as well as challenges experienced in RRI, and it is our purpose during this workshop to look at these in more detail in order to learn from, and then apply, to our work as we go forward.

Let me conclude by expressing our deep thank you to our hosts, the IFRC Country Cluster Support Team for ensuring, as always, that everything is in place to make this workshop the success it will be.

Thank you.

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