

CONCEPT PAPER

REVIVAL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA DISASTER RESPONSE NETWORK AND REGIONAL NETWORK OF RESPONDERS

Aims and Objectives

The Southeast Asia (SEA) Disaster Response Network is a concept that aims to build a localised team of responders in the SEA region, trained by the Region and to respond in the Region. The Network will seek guidance from and work in coordination with the host National Society and the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Network will need the trust of the leaders of National Societies, in order to be able to respond collectively in times of emergency and crisis.

The team would emphasise on the following values:

- Localisation and understanding of cultural differences
- Respect for the operations of the host National Society
- Building capacity in all SEA National Societies in various fields related to disaster management

Background

This initiative was first shared during the 16th RDMC meeting held in Singapore.^{1 2} Subsequently, at the 17th Annual Southeast Asia Red Cross and Red Crescent Leaders' meeting, localisation of humanitarian activities was further emphasised when the leaders agreed that it was beneficial for SEA National Societies to continue sharing good practices, experiences and resources with one another.

Areas of Focus

In early 2021, the Singapore Red Cross consulted all SEA National Societies on a Regional Network of Responders. There was agreement amongst all the members on the four primary functional activities of such a Network as follows:

¹ Terms of Reference: Regional Forum for Safety and Resilience, Bangkok 2013

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<https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RDMC-Road-map-2012-2015-22.06.2012.pdf>

1. Disaster Response
2. Capacity Building
3. Coordination and Engagement
4. Innovation and Technology

Disaster Response

- To establish a Disaster Response Network (DRN), made up of trained personnel and expertise within SEA
- The DRN to include personnel equipped with relevant skills to provide thematic support, including but not limited to, Logistics, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Water and Sanitation (WASH), and Medical, to countries in the region post-disaster
- Teams, with members drawn from SEA DRN, equipped with relevant skills to be deployed within 72 hours of a major/ significant disaster.

Capacity Building

- Support the development of disaster contingency and response plans for each National Society.
- Development of training programmes to upskill staff and volunteers in areas of disaster and crisis management, as well as disaster risk reduction.
- Organising relevant workshops to strengthen the capabilities of National Societies in disaster management.

Coordination and Engagement

- Mapping strengths of each National Society to cultivate better understanding amongst the SEA countries and enhance support for one another
- Formation of a technical working group and formulation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that are pre-agreed amongst SEA countries, including common terms, mode of operation and commitments
- The appointment of a Disaster Response Point of Contact in each SEA National Society to facilitate communications, and to hold regular meetings for National Societies to share their experiences and concerns with regards disaster response and management.

Innovation and Technology

- Exploring new technologies and initiatives to improve disaster response.
- Brainstorming innovative ideas for disaster response and preparedness.

- Implementing and integrating new systems to improve response efficiency.

Conclusion

The establishment of a well trained network, combined with an agreed system of operation and good coordination will most likely increase disaster response efficiency in the region. The SEA joint disaster response efforts will complement the efforts of the host National Society and Rapid Response Team of the IFRC. In addition, volunteers and members of SEA National Societies will be exposed to more deployment and learning opportunities, in turn, enhancing their capacity in responding to disasters.

In order to lay the groundwork for this initiative, it is proposed that the Leaders establish a taskforce to discuss the proposed idea further and its implementation, and report progress at the following SEA Leaders' Meeting in 2022.