

Engaging with ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Member States

Southeast Asia Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and IFRC Secretariat

Partnering with ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Member States

The framework of the IFRC Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy is built around the importance of persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interest of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

IFRC Asia Pacific Strategic Priorities stipulated the importance to expand partnership and collaboration with global, national, and local partners as well as National Societies. This partnership includes the collaboration with sub-regional inter-governmental organization such ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC), its entities and ASEAN Member States (AMS).

This partnership aims for Federation network to have greater reach and to work collaboratively with other partners for effective humanitarian work in the region.

The Bangkok Statement from the 2021 SEA RCRC Leadership Meeting reinforced the importance of engagement with ASEAN through the signing of MoU between ASEAN and IFRC. The signing was achieved in May 2022, when IFRC and ASEAN signed an “MoU on the Strengthening of Community Resilience in Southeast Asia” to work together on matters of mutual interest in supporting, consistently with and subject to respective mandates, priorities, and resources with the aim to strengthen the community at regional, national and local level in the ASEAN region. Based on this MoU, the areas of cooperation include:

- a) Disaster Management
- b) Disaster Risk Reduction
- c) Disaster law
- d) Health in emergencies
- e) Disaster relief and emergency response
- f) Gender/PGI
- g) Youth
- h) Climate change

This Manila Call for Action also serves as guidance for National Society on the implementation of this MoU, in which partnership with ASEAN as one of the most strategic humanitarian actors in the SEA region with the potential to increase our capacity and resources in improving community resilience.

The ten National Societies and IFRC secretariat should strive to strengthen the strategic dialogue with ASEAN decision-makers to influence strategy, policies, and humanitarian action in the best interest of vulnerable people in the ASEAN region. In addition, an important agenda is to build collaboration with AHA Centre on humanitarian operations during emergencies in the region.

ASEAN – IFRC MoU Implementation

A. SEA Federation-wide Humanitarian Diplomacy

Recognising that the responsibility to persuade is centrally connected to the knowledge, experience and mission of National Societies and the International Federation and hence is not a requirement to act on every subject of vulnerability.

Taking the above direction into consideration, with the wide spectrum of ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and its work plan, ASEAN Youth workplan, ASEAN Sports workplan, ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda for 2021 to 2025, the 10/11¹ National societies and IFRC Secretariat need to define its individual and collective Humanitarian Diplomacy Agenda and to decide on what areas of expertise it shall work with ASEC, its entities and AMS.

As mentioned, within the current MoU there are seven areas that were agreed in the cooperation between IFRC and ASEC. The IFRC Secretariat have proposed 3 areas for its HD agenda with and to ASEAN:

1) Climate Change (including anticipatory action);

- Climate and Environmental Charter for humanitarian organisations – encourage governments to sign the charter as supporters and work collaboratively on the targets set by each SEA societies
- Use the agreement to request contributions from AMS to the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, including the anticipatory action window

2) Protection, Gender and Inclusion; and

3) Disaster Law.

- Promote our guidelines and tools for disaster and public health law at a regional level and support to AMS at the national level with legislative and policy changes that enhance the auxiliary role

In addition, the health sector particularly related to community preparedness, resilience and community-based surveillance when facing pandemics, can also be another main topic for humanitarian diplomacy. Of course, these may vary depending on the programmatic focus on individual NS.

To have a more specific collective HD strategy and agenda, the Federation network in SEA needs to identify the common humanitarian issues in the region particularly on, but not limited to, the above points, by:

1. IFRC Secretariat could support analyzing common humanitarian issues in the region and to identify the HD agenda,
2. Focusing on National Societies context and their humanitarian diplomacy agenda particularly on their work with AMS.

B. Operational Coordination

Point E of the IFRC and ASEAN MoU focuses on disaster relief and emergency response, while recognizing the importance of building collaboration on providing timely humanitarian assistance

¹ This discussion includes CVTL although Timor-Leste is not a recognised member of ASEAN

during emergency, including complex emergency. The Federation-wide network should establish a strong communication and coordination mechanism to ensure implementation of its fundamental principles when cooperating on emergency operations.

C. National Capacity building

Each National Society has their own capacity building priorities based on their humanitarian context. As part of their auxiliary role to the government, it is important for National Societies to link their capacity building priorities to the humanitarian needs context of their country. Within this role, NS should work in collaboration with their government on increasing the national capacity on the areas provided in the MoU.

Role and Responsibilities

National Society:

- Engage with and influence their governments (AMS) as part of NS auxiliary role, on identified humanitarian issues of the country thus influencing ASEAN policymaking
- Engage with relevant humanitarian forum/events at country or regional level to promote and influence the discussion, particularly with relation to the established HD agenda.
- In collaboration with the IFRC secretariat, maintain the established structured communication channel on cooperation with ASEC and its entities, including the AHA Centre.
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IFRC Secretariat:

- Represent 10/11 NS in regional dialogue/agenda to ASEC and its entities
- Coordinate regional technical/strategic support with ASEC and its entities
- Act as the communication hub/ between ASEC/AHA Centre to the NS on regional cooperation and, in agreement with NS, on their behalf for country specific needs, including for emergency responses.

SEA Annual Leaders Meeting

The SEA Leaders meeting will serve as the platform to provide updates to leadership of the National Societies on the work conducted by IFRC Secretariat in relation to ASEAN.

This forum will also serve as NS leaders' platform to take strategic vision and direction on working with ASEAN, AHA Centre and AMS.

It is expected with such approaches, the defined HD will be amplified strongly from national/local level to regional level.