



*The Habibie Center*

## Talking ASEAN

**“Disaster Relief in ASEAN: Sharing  
Experiences and Best Practices”**



***Presentation and Discussion Report***

Tuesday, 17 June 2014 at 14.00 - 16.0  
The Habibie Center Building  
Jl. Kemang Selatan no. 98, Jakarta 12560



## DISCUSSION REPORT

# **Talking ASEAN on “Disaster Relief in ASEAN: Sharing Experiences and Best Practices”**

**The Habibie Center, Jakarta, Tuesday, June 17, 2014**

### **Introduction**

On Tuesday, 17 June 2014, The Habibie Center held a Talking ASEAN dialogue entitled “ASEAN Disaster Relief: Sharing Best Practices and Experiences” at The Habibie Center Building in Jakarta. This edition of Talking ASEAN featured Mr. Said Faisal (Executive Director, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, (AHA Centre)), Dr. Shih-Shen Chien (Associate Professor, Development Geography, National Taiwan University), Dr. Lin, Po-Hsiung (Associate Professor, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, National Taiwan University and Chief Secretary, Meteorological Society of Taiwan) and Mr. Avianto Amri (Disaster Risk Management Expert) as resource persons with Mr. A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi (ASEAN Studies Program Coordinator, The Habibie Center) as the moderator.

The objectives of this Talking ASEAN were to elaborate the perspective from various experts to: (a) discuss the progress of ASEAN’s capacity to respond to natural disasters of major magnitude since the regional organization first acknowledged their inadequacies in 1976; (b) to determine the reasons, challenges and obstacles that ASEAN member-states face in providing an effective humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to victims of major natural disasters in Southeast Asia – from a national and regional perspective; (c) to identify what best practices and experiences of disaster relief can be drawn from within the region and beyond; and (d) to suggest recommendations to realize the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and to improve the performance of the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Center.

This discussion report summarizes the key points of each speaker as well as the question and answer session that followed.

### **Mr. Said Faisal (Executive Director, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, (AHA Centre))**

The first resource invited to present was Mr. Said Faisal. In his presentation, Mr. Said addressed the vulnerability of the ASEAN region to natural disasters, the development of an ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management Response (AADMER), and the role & activities of the AHA Center.

He began by explaining that ASEAN as a region was highly exposed to natural hazards, with floods, storms, earthquakes and landslides being the most frequent types. He highlighted the

varying levels of exposure and vulnerability to the different hazards and consequently the different level of capacity in handling such disasters. Mr. Said pointed out that the past decade had seen significant disasters, namely the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, Cyclone Nargis of 2008 and Typhoon Haiyan of 2013. At the same time, the region regularly saw multiple medium-scale disasters occurring almost simultaneously over the last few years.

Mr. Said particularly highlighted the Indian Ocean Tsunami and Cyclone Nargis for the way in which the two disasters provided the momentum for developing the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) as well as seriously testing ASEAN's solidarity and relevance as a regional grouping.

The AADMER was adopted by ASEAN Foreign Ministers on July 26, 2005 with the aim of ensuring a more united and coordinated response towards natural disasters in the region, thus reducing human losses. Mr. Said went on to call for civil society organizations to also unite and be part of this endeavour. The AADMER also function as a legal framework for all ASEAN Member States and serves as a common platform in responding to disasters within ASEAN. In particular, the AADMER was described as a comprehensive agreement covering various aspects of Disaster Management including: Disaster Risk Identification, Assessment & Monitoring, Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Disaster Preparedness, Emergency Response, Rehabilitation, Technical Cooperation & Scientific Research, and AHA Centre establishment. Explaining how the AADMER's vision would be translated into action, Mr. Said noted the formation of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) which went on to develop the AADMER Work Programme (2010-2015).

Focusing on the AHA Centre, Mr. Said stated its establishment was for the purpose of facilitating co-operation and co-ordination among various parties, and with relevant United Nations and international organisations, in promoting regional collaboration, in accordance with Article 20.1 of the AADMER. Although the AHA Centre was established as a separate entity from the ASEAN Secretariat, both organisations worked closely together. It was further explained that further to the contributions from ASEAN member states as well as the facilities provided by Indonesia as the host country, AHA Center also received support from Dialogue Partners.

Mr. Said went on to describe the standard operating procedures of the AHA Centre. Namely that it would first analyse initial reports and notify other parties/entities of a natural disaster. The AHA Centre analysed each Situation Report and immediately notified other party/entity of the significant developments either (a) periodically or (b) by 10:00 am (Jakarta time). It would also forward requests for assistance if made by a country suffering from a natural disaster. However, if there were urgent situations, AHA Center strived to receive reports within the first 24 to 48 of hours of arrival of assistance at disaster site. As such, in the event of initial disaster occurrence or potentially emerging disaster, AHA Centre provided flash update to give a quick overview of the situation.

Another activity undertaken by the AHA Center was information sharing. Mr. Said highlighted the ASEAN Disaster Information Network (ADInet) which provided a regional disaster monitoring overview on a daily basis (accessed through <http://adinet.ahacentre.org>). This was in addition to the weekly regional disaster update provided by the AHA Center to give a snapshot of regional disaster information and the utilization of WebEOC to communicate

information to all ASEAN Member States so information can be disseminated timely. Mr. Said also explained that AHA Center was active on social media, disseminating disaster information and AHA Centre activities through Facebook and Twitter.

In Mr. Said's view, there were many examples which showed that the AHA Center played a crucial role in natural disaster response in ASEAN. In particular, he cited the close coordination the AHA Center had with local and national disaster management agencies in Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Lao, etc. Moreover, with a view towards the future, AHA Center ran an 'AHA Center Executive (ACE) Program' which was a training course aimed at preparing the next leaders of disaster management in ASEAN. Thus far, the first batch of the AHA Centre Executive (ACE) Programme had seen the participation of 13 officers from National Disaster Management offices from 7 ASEAN Member States with courses held in Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan, etc.

To end, Mr. Said concluded that the AHA Center had four main functions on disaster management: First is managing information, Second is facilitating assistance from ASEAN Member States, Third is supporting national disaster management offices of the affected country, and fourth providing support to the affected people through the government. Lastly, Mr. Said declared that once the stages of institutional establishment and institutional stability had been reached, there was a need to review the performance, functions and operation of the AHA Center as well as setting a new vision for the next level of regional disaster relief.

#### **Mr. Avianto Amri (Disaster Risk Management Expert)**

The second speaker invited to present was Mr. Avianto Amri who wished to cover the different perspectives of disaster risk management from a civil society perspective, highlight the challenges that exist but also point to the opportunities that were possible.

He described the ASEAN region as the most disaster prone in the world, noting that in the last 10 years more than 180 million people from ASEAN member-states had been affected by disasters. Noting that ASEAN member-states faced similar characteristics of hazards and also share common characteristics in the economic, social, cultural, and governance fields, Mr. Avianto warned that natural disasters had the potential to obliterate hard-won development achievements, thereby disrupting the region's stability.

Since the region was prone to a wide range of natural disasters – including earthquakes, tsunami, volcano, eruption, typhoon, floods, drought, landslides, and wildfire – Mr. Avianto asked, "What if the ten ASEAN nations work together to make sure communities in ASEAN are safer and disaster resilient?" He envisioned "One collaboration, One regional framework, One standard for disaster relief, and One vision to build models of resilience."

In this sense the AADMER was introduced as the first legally binding HFA-related (Hyogo Framework of Action) instrument, promoting cooperation, coordination, technical assistance, and resource mobilisation. By making the AHA Centre as the operational engine, Mr. Avianto argued that ASEAN had made remarkable progress and achievements in the area of disaster management.

However, he acknowledged that challenges remained. In particular, ASEAN member-states continue to have different level of capacities in disaster management and emergency response. Disaster relief required multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary, and multi-sectoral approaches, and so a high level of coordination was needed to respond to large scale disasters. This was applicable across all sectors of governments as well as non-governments, with effective leadership required to provide a clear vision and objectives for humanitarian responses to a specific crisis, and building a consensus that brings aid assistance together.

Despite these challenges, Mr. Avianto also pointed to opportunities. Namely: strengthening collaboration with the international humanitarian system; going beyond the current disaster management mechanisms; enhancing institutional capacity to mobilize an all ASEAN response; & expanding partnerships with businesses, civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, philanthropic organizations, and many others.

In his conclusion, Mr. Avianto stated that what the region really needed is the strengthening of collaboration between ASEAN and the International Humanitarian System. While the UN had the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination as well as the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, ASEAN has ERAT (Emergency Response Assessment Team) and ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator. Thus the homework for all involved was how to improve the collaboration of these bodies.

Mr. Avianto also called for going beyond HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) mechanisms, to also involve the contributions from the sectors of education, health, infrastructure, military, foreign affairs, disaster management, and others. According to Mr. Avianto, "We also need to expand collaboration, from university, international donors, as well as civil society to tackle this problem."

**Dr. Shiu-Shen Chien (Associate Professor, Development Geography, National Taiwan University) and Dr. Lin, Po-Hsiung (Associate Professor, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, National Taiwan University and Chief Secretary, Meteorological Society of Taiwan)**

The last to present were Dr. Shiu-Shen Chien and Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin who provided a joint presentation on the technological and social dimensions of natural disaster management from the Taiwanese experience. Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin explained to the audience how Taiwan was able to watch and track potential and actual natural calamities surrounding Taiwan through satellite observations and numerical models' forecast. In particular, he highlighted Taiwan's use of multiple sensors and RAMB satellites to conduct observations. This would then lead to information announcement to relevant authorities and the public, with Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin adding that they also did education, research and foreign activities.

Meanwhile Dr. Shiu-Shen Chien briefed the audience on the way in which Taiwan developed an information sharing system using ICT. Here he highlighted the benefits of using ICT, pointing to its effectiveness during Typhoon Morakot which had enabled information sharing during the disaster and continuous reporting during the post-disaster period. He also pointed to the use of social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomics, and video sharing sites to allow Taiwanese to interact and collaborate with each other for disaster relief. One example highlighted was the Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) systems which was used by the public and played an

important role in addressing natural disasters. It was also added that such VGI systems had been helpful during the Haiti Earthquake of 2010, with Dr. Shih-Shen Chien naming several VGI-based platforms such as: CrisisCamp Haiti, OpenStreetMap, Ushahidi, GeoCommons.

Moreover, it was noted that VGI technology was effective for civil voluntary aids, as it enabled information to be updated and published quickly and easily regarding fundraising, goods collections and volunteer recruitments.

Dr. Shih-Shen Chien went on to highlight the advantages of social media in the post-disaster recovery phase. He argued that social media platforms allowed direct information gathering from the field as well as to share information and knowledge. He likened this approach to that of public journalism, i.e. everyone can be online reporters just as they can be disaster relief agents.

In conclusion, Dr. Shih-Shen Chien and Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin said that in the Web 2.0 era, the strength and influence of civil society should be utilized to address natural disasters and facilitate post-disaster recovery. This could be done by using user-friendly ICT platforms.

### **Question and Answer Session :**

**Comment No. 1:** If we talk about the AHA Center, we know it needs significant funds to overcome any natural catastrophes in the ASEAN region. How is the funding for the AHA Center? What are the contributions of ASEAN member-states and others? Is it like the Chiang Mai Initiative?

#### **Responses:**

**Mr. Said:** There is an ASEAN disaster management fund which each ASEAN member-state contributes to annually. There is also an AADMER fund which ASEAN countries can use to support their operations. Indonesia also has good experiences when it comes to fundraising, since as we all know Indonesia has its own challenges. Perhaps Indonesia can be a good model for mobilizing people to fund disaster relief.

**M. Avianto:** Indonesia certainly has a lot of challenges but we also see in the Thailand case and in the Myanmar case good models for fundraising efforts. The most important thing is to make sure that all our efforts are sound and well.

**Comment No. 2:** Regarding Dr. Chien and Dr. Lin's explanation, I was wondering how ASEAN can develop institutional mechanisms. Also I'm interested with the idea of civil society involvement (and using social media). I wonder, although this may be effective with urban population, we know that in the ASEAN region many natural disasters take place in rural areas where social media usage is limited. How can ICT be applied in rural areas?

#### **Responses:**

**Mr. Avianto:** The shared relationship with ASEAN and civil society is not just about will or lack of will (political will), but also about capacity. We have AADMER partner groups and then we are working closely with some civil society groups. Last week we had a number of training sessions with stakeholders from all ASEAN countries. This is what we do regularly.

**Mr. Said:** I always believe that civil society's involvement in disaster relief is present tense and not future tense. Before, civil society never worked very closely with ASEAN, but now there is mechanism for civil society to work together with ASEAN Secretariat. There has been a lot of progress and this can be seen in civil society's contribution in Typhoon Haiyan's response.

**Dr. Shiuh-Shen Chien and Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin:** It is a good concern about the effectiveness of civil society (And social media) in rural areas. But we believe there is a technological dimension and social dimensions. Although civil society might be less present in rural areas they are nonetheless very important there. They can thus help in sharing information as they are the ones on the ground and have networks in rural areas.

**Comment No. 3:** What do you think about the involvement or role of military, especially navy, in ASEAN disaster relief? Are there any plan to have joint navy operation in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in the region? What do you think about this idea to have joint humanitarian assistance in ASEAN involving the militaries of the region?

**Responses:**

**Mr. Said:** The role of the military in ASEAN is important and the military also recognizes its important role when it comes to providing an effective response to natural disasters. In an emergency, the military plays a very big role. On the question about joint operations, certainly we have the feeling of "One ASEAN, One response, together as one" and this is the real test on the regionalism that we are creating and trying to achieve. To have joint military operations in ASEAN and joint taskforce in ASEAN, it needs more harmonization to prevent different actor doing their own different efforts. This is something about execution. So, it can be done, but lots of things needs to be resolved first.

**Comment No. 4:** Regarding Taiwan's expertise, how is the role of diplomacy? Do you think we should have disaster diplomacy?

**Dr. Shiuh-Shen Chien and Dr. Po-Hsiung Lin:** Some say that disaster management can be seen as a form soft diplomacy and there are certainly many platforms, including APEC to also discuss disaster management on the side lines. Diplomacy matters, but we should not so focus too much on politizing disaster management. Diplomacy is needed to strengthen the content (of disaster relief) rather than talking about the politics and conflicting issues that may crosscut with the disaster.

**Comment. No. 5:** Is there any roadmap for the AHA Center especially on how to strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) program ?

**Responses:**

**Mr. Said:** At the moment it is true there is no roadmap but it does not mean ASEAN does is not taking it seriously. We need to first harmonise operations amongst 10 ASEAN member states. There are a lot of aspects in disaster management, from emergency to post-disaster development. We also have several actors doing this. For the AHA Center, our first priority is

providing emergency response at the regional level. Disaster Risk Reduction can be done internally by each ASEAN member states.

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