Potential Policies and Areas of Cooperation on Disaster Management and Emergency Response between ASEAN and Canada

This article discusses the disaster management needs of ASEAN, as well as potential policies and areas of cooperation between ASEAN and Canada regarding disaster management and emergency response. In this context the term *disaster* is defined as a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses. Furthermore, the range of activities, prior to, during and after disasters, designed to maintain control over disasters and to provide a framework for helping at-risk persons and/or communities to avoid, minimise or recover from the impact of the disasters is defined as *disaster management and emergency response*. ASEAN has divided disaster management and emergency response into three distinguished phases; 1) *emergency relief*, defined as the mobilisation of additional resources to meet the emergency relief needs of victims in the affected countries, 2) *rehabilitation and reconstruction*, defined as supporting and emphasizing the importance of national rehabilitation and reconstruction programs given the devastation of the basic infrastructures and services in the affected countries, and 3) *prevention and mitigation*, defined as the development and implementation of strategies to identify, prevent and reduce risks arising from hazards, including the use of regional disaster prevention and mitigation programmes.

**ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Response Needs** – with the increasing importance of building and strengthening the ASEAN Community, it is crucial to be aware of potential disasters in the region and to create response plans accordingly. The following items outline the direction ASEAN is pursuing in regard to disaster management and emergency response:

1. **ASEAN Declaration for Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters (1976):** The original five ASEAN Member States, the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore and the Kingdom of Thailand demonstrated the importance of cooperation in disaster relief early on by establishing the Declaration for Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters in 1967.

2. **ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint:** As outlined in the APSC Blueprint, ASEAN is pursuing a strengthened cooperation on disaster management and emergency response by 1) enhancing joint effective and early response at the political and operational levels in activating the ASEAN disaster management arrangements; 2) enhancing civilian-military coordination in proving effective and timely response to major natural disasters; 3) finalizing the SOP for Regional Standby Arrangements and Cooperation of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations; 4) working towards effective interface on disaster management between ASEAN and other ASEAN-related bodies; and 5) developing ARF strategic guidelines for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief cooperation.

3. **ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint:** As outlined in the ASCC Blueprint, ASEAN is pursuing disaster-resilient nations and safer communities by 1) fully implementing the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) by 2015; 2) supporting the establishment and operationalization of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management.
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(AHA Center); 3) institutionalizing capacity building programmes in areas of priority concern of Member States by 2015, and promoting technical cooperation, joint research and networking to increase the capacity and capability of Member States in responding to disasters and reducing losses from disasters; 4) establishing a fully functioning ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network by the year 2010; 5) implementing or enhancing public awareness and education programmes on a regular basis, and promoting public participation in programmes aimed to promote community resilience to disasters; 6) promoting partnership with relevant stakeholders; 7) carrying both national and ASEAN flag or logo to promote visibility of ASEAN among the first responders engaged in humanitarian issues; 8) promoting sustainable livelihood options through socio-economic development activities to minimise disaster risks and enhance community coping capacities; 9) strengthening community-based disaster preparedness and participation through promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices, implementation of public awareness and education and sharing of best practices and lessons learnt; 10) promoting wider utilisation of services of existing regional facilities in providing early warning information and technical advisories; 11) establishing an ASEAN volunteer programme to assist disaster stricken areas; and 12) promoting multi-sectoral coordination and planning on Pandemic Preparedness and Response at the regional level, including the development of a regional Multi-Sectoral Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan.

4. Bali Declaration on ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations “Bali Concord III:” The Bali Concord III reaffirms APSC and ASCC’s purposes and principles for disaster management and emergency response, with an emphasis on promoting partnership, enhancing public awareness and cooperation between civil and military service.

5. Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan 2 (2009–2015): Similar to actions outlined in the APSC and ASCC Blueprints, the IAI Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan 2 provide specific actions aimed at narrowing the development gap among ASEAN Member States including the development and implementation of programmes, strategies and policies to effectively manage disasters and provide emergency response.

6. Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004: Following the earthquake and tsunami of 2004, ASEAN Member States established the Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention. This declaration outlines ASEAN’s three disaster management and emergency response phases; 1) emergency relief, 2) rehabilitation and reconstruction, and 3) prevention and mitigation.

7. ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER): The AADMER was finalised in 2005, and aimed at providing effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of the ASEAN people, and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international co-operation. Major priorities are outlined as 1) Disaster Risk Identification, Assessment and Monitoring; 2) Disaster Prevention and Mitigation; 3) Disaster Preparedness; 4) Emergency Response; 5) Rehabilitation; 6) Technical Co-Operation and Scientific
Current Status of ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Response – ASEAN is said to be geographically located in one of the most disaster prone regions of the world. These natural disasters typically include typhoons, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, forest-fires, droughts, and epidemics. During the last 40 years (1970-2009), 1,211 reported disasters have caused over 414,900 deaths. Out of the reported disasters, 36 per cent were floods, 32 per cent were cyclonic storms, 9 per cent were earthquakes, 8 per cent were epidemics, and 7 per cent were landslides. Cyclones (storms) caused the maximum number of deaths: over 184,000, followed by earthquakes (114,000) and tsunamis (83,600). The following items briefly describe the disaster management and emergency response actions, policies and initiatives that are currently available within ASEAN:

1. **AADMER Work Programme**: The AADMER Work Programme is divided into two phases. Each of the two phases have different expected outputs, however work toward the similar goal of improving ASEAN’s disaster management and emergency response. The first phase began in 2010 and was completed 2012, emphasizing regional risk assessment, early warning programmes, monitoring, institutional and technical risk assessment, as well as the sharing of regional guidelines and best practices. The launch of Phase II will be held in Ha Noi in November of 2013. Phase II of the AADMER Work Programme will focus on presenting results from Phase I, testing the outcomes from Phase I, continuing to monitor, and creating training programmes.

2. **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**: Under the ASEAN Secretariat, the ARF has hosted and organized several disaster relief and emergency response exercises. ARF has also kept a detailed record of contacts and organizers to help maintain the disaster relief and emergency response network. Reports and contact lists can be accessed on the ARF website.

3. **ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX)**: In October of 2013 the AHA Centre will provide an opportunity to test ASEAN’s response mechanisms under the AADMER in Ha Noi. This simulation exercise not only allows ASEAN to see how a natural disaster might affect it, but also offers an opportunity for networking, collaboration, trial and error, critical thinking and experience.

4. **ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA centre)**: As a result of the AADMER, the AHA centre was established in order to carry out the agreement’s actions steps and to facilitate co-operation and co-ordination on humanitarian assistance on disaster management among the parties, and with relevant United Nations and international organizations, in promoting regional collaboration. The AHA Centre works on the basis that the Party will act first to manage and respond to disasters.

5. **Disaster Relief Fund**: As outlined in the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, ASEAN has developed the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund. It is to administered by the ASEAN Secretariat under the guidance of the Conference of Parties.
6. **ASEAN Day for Disaster Management (ADDM):** Held the second week of every October, ADDM is celebrated annually to raise awareness of ASEAN people about disaster resilience and risk reduction.\(^5\)

7. **ASEAN Emergency Response Assessment Team (ERAT):** The primary objective of the ASEAN-ERAT deployment is to support ASEAN Member States affected by disasters in the initial phase of disasters, to conduct rapid assessments, coordinate with local authorities for the deployment of regional disaster management assets and provide logistics support to the affected countries for receiving humanitarian goods and assistance to the disaster-affected areas. The ASEAN-ERAT team is composed of experienced and trained individuals who have responded to disaster incidents in the region. ASEAN-ERAT was established by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management and is managed by the AHA Centre.\(^6\)

8. **ASEAN Disaster Emergency Logistic System:** On December 7, 2012, ASEAN’s AHA Centre launched the ASEAN Disaster Emergency Logistic System, which was developed to ensure a quick availability of emergency relief items that can be accessed by Member States following medium to large-scale disasters.\(^19\)

9. **ASEAN Early Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT):** The role of the ASEAN-ERAT is to respond quickly to a major sudden on-set disaster or man-made emergency in one or more Member States within the ASEAN region. The function of the ASEAN-ERAT is to support the National Focal Point/s and Competent Authorities of the disaster-affected Member State/s in the initial phases of the disaster to: 1) conduct rapid assessments of the disaster-affected areas; 2) estimate the scale, severity and impact of the disaster; 3) gather information and report on the immediate needs of the affected population; and 4) coordinate with the AHA Centre for the mobilization, response and deployment of regional disaster management assets, capacities and humanitarian goods and assistance to the disaster-affected areas.\(^5\)

10. **SOP for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations:** Following the AADMER, in 2008 the ASEAN Committee Disaster Management Meeting outlined and adopted specific policies and procedures for disaster management and emergency response within ASEAN. This SOP outlines the following items: 1) disaster preparedness; 2) assessment and monitoring; 3) emergency response; and 4) facilitation and utilization of military assets and capacities.\(^8\)

**Canada’s International Role in Disaster Management and Emergency Response** – Canada is internationally recognized as a leading nation in the areas of disaster management and emergency response. The following items briefly outline Canada’s major initiatives supporting disaster management and emergency response:

1. **Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (FATD):** FATD houses Canada’s humanitarian response program initiatives, including the public International Humanitarian Assistance programs. With an appropriate assessment of needs, Canada is committed to providing appropriate, timely and effective humanitarian assistance. This assistance is guided by four general principles: 1) humanity, saving lives and alleviating suffering; 2) impartiality, actions must be implemented solely based on need, without discrimination between populations or within an affected population; 3) neutrality, actions must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute; and 4)
independence, all objectives must be autonomous from political, economic, or military objectives.  

2. **Emergency Disaster Assistance Fund (EDAF):** The EDAF is a draw-down fund administered by the Canadian Red Cross Society that allows for immediate Canadian support to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emergency operations in response to sudden-onset small- and medium-scale humanitarian situations, including natural disasters, non-recurrent health epidemics, and conflicts. The EDAF increases the effectiveness and timeliness of assistance to crisis-affected people. Its most recent assistance was given during the recent June 2013 monsoons in India.  

3. **OCHA Central Emergency Response Funds:** Canada is major donor to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, agreeing to give up to 192,000,000 US Dollars each year from 2007 to 2012. The funds for this donation is distributed accordingly: Africa receives 50%, Asia receives 30%, the Americas receive 15% and Europe receives 5%.  

4. **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA):** A major focus for CIDA is to fund, promote and disseminate research and knowledge on development, including disasters. Annual reports on Global Humanitarian Assistance Programmes are sponsored by CIDA, which publish in-depth reports on humanitarian financing. Another well known project is the Sphere Project, which supporting the development and dissemination of standards in the most important sectors of humanitarian response. And the final major project of CIDA is to learn, teach and hold accountability initiatives, such as Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.  

5. **Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART):** The DART is not a standing unit but a core group of existing military capabilities that are pre-identified and retained at a high level of readiness. Most DART equipment, stores and supplies are kept at the High Readiness Detachment in Trenton, Ontario and are maintained by a small support staff. DART personnel achieve a high level of individual readiness and come together periodically for collective training exercises. In most cases, civilian authorities of the Affected Nation will coordinate the emergency response with support from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).  

6. **Multi-sector Industry:** Not only does Canada’s public sector play a leading international role in humanitarian assistance, disaster management and emergency relief, but both of Canada’s private and non-profit sectors support aid. For example, the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, Canada is a leading donor for humanitarian response, representing the private sector, and there are numerous nonprofits counterparts supporting humanitarian assistance from Canada. This multi-sector industry demonstrates the importance that Canadians place on humanitarian assistance, disaster management and emergency relief.  

**Recommendations for ASEAN’s Future Disaster Management and Emergency Response Policy** – as ASEAN continues to address the future of disaster management and emergency response, it is important for ASEAN to research and evaluate its current disaster management and emergency response, and follow up by adjusting discussion, strategy, policy and implementation. Research by the Global Risk Data Platform demonstrates that ASEAN is among the most vulnerable regions to natural disasters. To address this trend, the following
items offer recommendations for developing effective disaster management and emergency response policy for ASEAN:

1. **Outline Policy Goals:** In a speech during the Conference of Parties Meeting in Ha Noi 2013, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung explained that the top priorities for ASEAN’s disaster management and emergency relief include installing early-warning systems, raising public awareness, updating legislation, and upgrading natural disaster prevention/control projects. As outlined in the AADMER, it is important that the Conference of Parties continues to track and encourage the progress of these pressing issues.

2. **Research and Development (R&D):** In the *Synthesis Report on Ten ASEAN Countries Disaster Risks Assessment*, the ASEAN Disaster Risk Management Initiative recommends further analysis in three priority areas: 1) historical records of natural disasters in the region; 2) worst-case scenarios for densely populated ASEAN cities; and 3) standard risk assessment of high risk hazards and regions.

3. **Develop a Budget:** Each year, on average, the ASEAN region experiences annual expected losses caused by natural disasters estimated at US$4.6 billion or 0.25% of the region’s GDP. It is crucial that ASEAN Member States take this annual expected loss into account and prepare accordingly. Not only so, but it is also recommended that ASEAN continues to develop and maintain the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund, as outlined in the AADMER. In order to prevent, mitigate and respond to disasters, ASEAN must continue to adjust the budget accordingly and finance the projects wisely.

4. **Policy Implementation:** After creating policy for ASEAN’s future disaster management and emergency response, it is important for the ASEAN Member States to be held accountable for upholding the policy. In the AADMER a Conference of Parties has been established with the responsibility to take action to ensure effective policy implementation. Supporting and strengthening this concept will help foster effective disaster management and emergency response policy in ASEAN.

**Partnership Recommendations for Future Cooperation Between ASEAN and Canada on Disaster Management and Emergency Response** – Canada has been a longstanding dialogue partner to ASEAN since 1977, however has seldom cooperated with ASEAN on disaster management and emerge response. To encourage increased activity between ASEAN and Canada on disaster management and emergency response, the following items discuss potential policies and areas of cooperation on disaster management and emergency response:

1. **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx):** DiREx is a disaster relief exercise organized by the ARF. In the past it has been co-hosted by two countries; in 2011 Indonesia and Japan hosted the exercise and in 2013 Thailand and South Korea hosted the exercise. The objectives of the ARF DiREx are 1) to advance and build capacity of ARF members in the civil-military coordination in response to disasters; 2) to improve multinational disaster response capability, focusing heavily on civil-military coordination; 3) to test the existing standard operating procedures, protocols, and tools in the ASEAN region; 4) to advance the ARF participants’ ability to rapidly provide coordinated and effective disaster relief; and 5) to advance the affected host nation’s ability to respond to humanitarian assistance requirements caused by natural disasters.
Co-hosting a DiREx event will not only give ASEAN Member States an opportunity to review and practice their protocol, but can also deepen ASEAN – Canada relations.

2. **ARF Voluntary Disaster Response (ARF-VDF):** In 2009, the U.S. Department of State and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held the first Disaster Relief Exercise, also referred to as Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR), in the Philippines. The ARF-VDR was a civilian-led, military supported demonstration designed to display ARF nations’ capabilities. The exercise followed a hypothetical super-typhoon, where participating countries offered assistance in response to a Philippine Government request for international humanitarian relief. Areas of demonstration include land, air and maritime search and rescue, medical assistance/evacuation and engineering reconstruction. Civil-military projects included reconstruction of a school building, construction of a bridge, installation of a water system and the medical treatment of approximately 8,000 Filipinos in the Central Luzon area. At this point ASEAN and Canada have not yet cooperated on a disaster relief or emergency response exercise. Co-hosting an exercise will not only give ASEAN Member States an opportunity to review and practice their protocol, but can also deepen ASEAN – Canada relations.

3. **ICT Project for Disaster Management:** As a project of Phase II, AHA Centre established an 18-month Information and Communication Technology project aimed at establishing connectivity of the AHA Centre with all of national disaster management offices (NDMOs), to ensure that all necessary data and information can be exchanged between the AHA Centre and NDMOs during disaster and non-disaster situation and to enhance capacity of the AHA Centre related to ICT and connectivity. This project is supported by the Government of Japan’s Japanese-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). During Phase I, the project concentrated on establishing ICT platforms, systems, and equipment for the AHA Centre. These tasks have been accomplished and the AHA Centre now has a fully equipped operations room with sophisticated ICT. This project is currently developing special software to facilitate the offer of assistance from ASEAN Member States upon the request of disaster-affected countries in the region and coordination by the AHA Centre. Training programs will also be provided to the staff of both the AHA Centre and NDMOs to manage and operate the ICT system developed under the project. This project demonstrates that not all cooperation on disaster management and emergency response need to be exercises, and that Canada can join ASEAN in preparing by cooperating on logistics, technology and organization.

4. **ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management (ARPDM):** The main priorities for ARPDM are to outline ASEAN’s regional strategy on disaster management, priority areas and activities for disaster reduction. The ARPDM consists of 29 activities, which are categorised into five major components: 1) Establishment of the ASEAN Response Action Plan; 2) Refresher Courses/ Expertise Development; 3) ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network (ASEAN DISCNet), i.e. Development of ACDM Website and NDMO Websites; and Publication of ASEAN Disaster Management Information Network (ADMIN) Newsletter; 4) Partnerships with Relevant Organisations and NGOs; and Mobilising Financial Support and Resources; and 5) ASEAN Day for Disaster Management; and Enhancing Disaster Management Public Education and Awareness Programmes. Ongoing partners of ARPDM include the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Pacific Disaster Centre, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN High
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, IFRC, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), among others. Inviting Canada to partner with ASEAN on these regional programmes can foster deeper relations between ASEAN and Canada.

5. **U.S. – ASEAN Emergency Preparedness Workshop 2012**: In cooperation with the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), the U.S. Trade and Development Agency sponsored a 2.5-day ASEAN Disaster Management, Mitigation, and Response Technologies Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, from May 30 through June 1, 2012. This activity acted as the inaugural activity of the ASEAN-U.S. Connectivity Cooperation Initiative. The workshop assisted disaster management authorities from ASEAN economies in identifying appropriate technical and operational solutions as well as enhancing capabilities to adequately prepare for and effectively respond to disaster-related emergencies. Some discussed topics include regional cooperation and capacity building for disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, technology applications for managing disaster risk, terrestrial and satellite telecommunications applications for emergency response, as well as meteorological tracking, hazards early warning, mapping, and engineering design for mitigation. Encouraging participation in similar workshops from Canada can act as a manner of strengthening ASEAN – Canada relations, meanwhile proving an opportunity for ASEAN Member States to familiarize themselves with topics on disaster management and emergency response.

As demonstrated in this article there are many potential policies and areas of cooperation between ASEAN and Canada regarding disaster management and emergency response. Among the top priorities for ASEAN’s disaster management and emergency response, the most critical include installing early-warning systems, raising public awareness, updating legislation, and upgrading natural disaster prevention/control projects. As an international leading donor of humanitarian assistance, including disaster management and emergency response, Canada exemplifies itself as a potential partner to ASEAN’s priorities. Major areas of cooperation and policy include public awareness programs, disaster management and emergency response exercises as well as technological assistance related to disaster management and emergency response. Developing and fostering these potential partnerships on disaster management and emergency response, would not only benefit ASEAN’s preparedness for potential regional disasters, but would also help in strengthening the friendship and partnership between ASEAN and Canada as a whole.
Notes:

1) ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response


