

## **PROGRESS OF THE HFA IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ASEAN REGION**

*By Adelina Kamal*

*Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division,*

*ASEAN Secretariat*

*(presented at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, 16 – 19 June 2009)*

---

ASEAN region is the home of over 570 million people. But our region is also the home of disasters. Within the span of five years, ASEAN region was the home of two mega disasters, i.e. the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that hit four ASEAN countries, and the May 2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. In between these mega disasters, ASEAN region also experienced significant disasters, such as earthquakes, typhoons, floods, droughts, landslides and many others. In 2008 alone, ASEAN region suffered the loss of 60% of the world's reported victims caused by natural disasters.

ASEAN realises that DRR efforts will protect our development gains, and save peoples' lives. In this regard, ASEAN has developed the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which hopefully will enter into force soon. The Agreement puts high priority in effective disaster risk reduction, but it also aims to strengthen our collective response to disaster emergencies in the ASEAN region.

While the decision to develop the Agreement was made before the tsunami, the negotiation took place in early 2005 after the tsunami. At such, we benefited from ASEAN countries' experience from the tsunami. Our Agreement has also benefited from the HFA since the negotiation process started after the Kobe conference. Our Agreement reaffirms and is a manifestation of ASEAN's commitment to the implementation of the HFA. When AADMER is entered into force, it will be the first HFA-related binding instrument in the world and ASEAN's contribution to the global disaster risk reduction aims.

Two other important ASEAN documents which have been used to guide our work on DRR are the ASEAN Charter, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. The ASEAN Charter, which gives the legal personality to ASEAN, says that among the purposes of ASEAN are to enhance regional resilience, alleviate poverty, narrow the development gaps, promote sustainable development, and enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples. Our Charter also puts ASEAN peoples at the centre-stage. Based on the people-centred approach, the challenge for us now is to make sure that our activities, including our agreements, will benefit the peoples.

The other document is the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, which aims among others to achieve a disaster resilient and safer region by the year 2015. This is part of ASEAN's efforts to build a solid ASEAN community by the year 2015.

I would like now to briefly mention the progress of HFA implementation in the ASEAN region, which is based on the national reports submitted by seven ASEAN countries, and the sub-regional report submitted by the ASEAN Secretariat.

The good news is that we are making progress in all priority for actions. Mechanisms, structures, systems and strategies related to DRR are in place. National strategies are adopted or exist in five of the ten ASEAN countries, and one country is currently developing its national action plan on DRR.

In terms of progress at the national level, the most significant progress is reported under priority number 5 (Preparedness for Response), followed by priority number 1 (Good Governance), 2 (Risk Assessment and Early Warning Systems) then 3 (Education, Information and Public Awareness). The lowest achievement is reported under priority number 4 (Reducing Underlying Risks of Disasters).

In terms of progress at the regional level, the most significant progress is also reported under priority number 5, followed by priority 1 and 2 with the same ratings, then 3. The lowest achievement is reported under priority number 4.

The country reports also indicate that while there is a varying degree of achievements in all 7 reports, the newer ASEAN members have reported the bigger gaps among the seven. These actually provide opportunities where ASEAN countries with significant achievements can help fill in the gaps of other ASEAN countries.

The review also indicates that there are areas where regional activities have quite significant achievements and these could help complement and even multiply the progress at national level.

In this regard, documenting and sharing of good practices should continue. At the regional level, ASEAN can offer framework, approaches, common indicators, monitoring and evaluation, within the framework of AADMER.

Regional bodies such as ASEAN can effectively facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience and resources among countries in the region. Within the ASEAN context, AADMER will be the framework to facilitate such a process.

More work, however, needs to be done for priority number 4 (Reducing Underlying Risk Factors). We also need to link AADMER to the emerging and cross-cutting issues, including

linking to climate change adaptation, and the development issues to address the underlying risks.

In terms of next steps, ASEAN is committed to the full operationalisation of the Agreement. While waiting for the entry into force, the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management is currently working on a new work programme covering the cycle of 2010 to 2015, since our current work programme will end soon.

Under the new programme, we intend to include the emerging issues, such as linking to CCA, and the development issues, including narrowing the development gap, reducing poverty and protecting the most vulnerable. DRR will also need to be promoted to all levels in our Agreement, including preparedness, response and rehabilitation. We have the strategies and mechanisms in place, so now the next steps would be actions and investments. Capacity building to improve the institutional and human capacity remains a priority.

AADMER and HFA also needs to be promoted to other sectors in ASEAN using the multi-sectoral approach like what ASEAN is doing now in the case of pandemic. We are also exploring opportunities with the civil society, particularly the ASEAN-born, to leverage on their unique abilities to help us reach out to the 576 million of people.

In terms of HFA reporting, it has been a good exercise as it provides indications of where we are and what else needs to be done. However, as AADMER will enter into force soon and there will be a mid-term HFA evaluation coming up next year, we need to synchronise the reporting mechanisms for HFA and AADMER, and set the benchmark and common indicators to be able to assess progress objectively among the countries.

----OOO----