The ASEAN

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BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES
Building Resilience

ISSN 2721-8058

THE INSIDE VIEW
Ready for the Dry Years

SNAPSHOTS
Disability Inclusion and COVID-19

SHIFTING CURRENTS
COVID-19 and the New Poor

Ministerial Bodies Sectoral Bodies * takes guidance from and reports to both AMCA and AMRI

AMRI-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information

AMCA-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts

AMMY-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth

ASED-ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting

AMMS-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports

AMRDPE-ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

AMMSWD-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

AMMW-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women

ALMM-ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

ACCSM-The Heads of Civil Service Meeting for ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

AHMM-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

AMMDM-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management

COP-AADMER-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

AMME-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment

COP to AATHP-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

SOMCA-Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts

COCI-The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information

SOMRI-Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information

SOMY-Senior Officials Meeting on Youth

SOMED-Senior Officials Meeting on Education

SOMS-Senior Officials Meeting on Sports

SOMRDPE-Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

SOMSWD-Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

ACWC-ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

ACW-ASEAN Committee on Women

SLOM-Senior Labour Officials Meeting

SOM-ACCSM-Senior Officials Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

SOMHD-Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development

ACDM-ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management

ASOEN-ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment

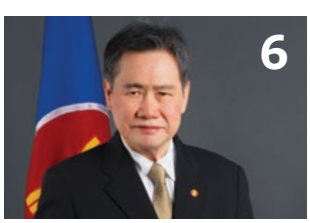
COM to AATHP-Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

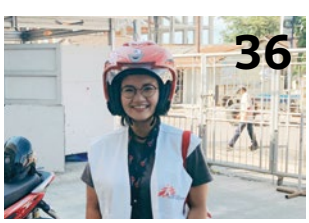
In this issue

The Inside View: Disaster Management

Shifting Currents

Snapshots





Interviews

Conversations

Infographics

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On the cover: A family stays in the shell of their damaged home, after Super Typhoon Haiyan ravaged Leyte province in the Philippines, November 2013

Cover **©ymphotos/Shutterstock**
Composed by **Kramakata**

A Note from the Editorial Team

The ASEAN magazine was wrapping up work on this edition when Super Typhoon Goni ripped through the Philippines' northeastern coast. Almost a million residents evacuated to safer grounds to avoid the expected storm surges. In just one month, five typhoons have struck the Mekong Delta region, displacing millions more and causing the loss of lives and property. Viet Nam bears the brunt of the strongest storm it has experienced in 20 years.

The region is experiencing the wrath of severe typhoons that have become more intense and frequent in recent years. The impact of these series of cyclones is a stark reminder that early warning systems, response, and risk reduction measures need to be in place before any disaster strikes.

The ASEAN Secretariat's Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management discuss the regional mechanisms that are in place to prepare for and respond to this string of disasters in the region.

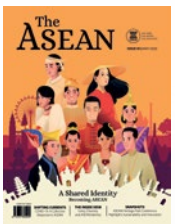
After the September edition on Climate Change, this month's issue takes a closer look at extreme weather disruptions caused by rising global temperatures. This edition also focuses on slow on-set disasters like agricultural drought. UN Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana says the ASEAN region experienced the most severe droughts in the past five years.

In our Conversations section, we look at disasters through the lens of a photographer and through the eyes of people who have witnessed the impacts of terrible calamities—a doctor, a survivor, a development worker, and a couple of artists turned community organisers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the socio-economic risks that the poor and most vulnerable face. The World Bank predicts as many as 115 million people worldwide will slide into extreme in 2020 because of the pandemic, creating a "new poor." In ASEAN, many of those who may be at risk of extreme poverty live in areas struck by the recent disasters.

In this issue, we also feature a special report on child, early, and forced marriages, by the ASEAN Secretariat's Poverty Eradication and Gender Division.

We tie up this month's edition with a lighter look at rice, the grain that binds ASEAN nations together.



Issue 1
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Issue 3
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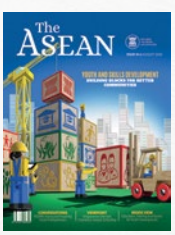

Issue 4
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V4

Issue 5
https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_V5

THE INSIDE VIEW

Viewpoint:
Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN

Several countries in the region have been hit by a series of powerful typhoons, flooding, landslides, and forest fires over the past few years. How has ASEAN and the Member States responded to these transboundary disasters?

Secretary-General Lim: As a regional organisation, ASEAN has been pioneering coherent and coordinated regional actions. One of the most important actions is the **ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution**. The Agreement is the first regional arrangement in the world that binds a group of contiguous states to tackle transboundary haze pollution resulting from land and forest fires. It has also been considered a global role model for tackling transboundary issues.

Just this October, several disasters struck the region. Tropical storms Linfa and Nangka heavily impacted Viet Nam, Cambodia and Lao PDR. Typhoon Molave came next and affected the Philippines and Viet Nam. In the wake of Molave, came Super Typhoon Goni, battering the Philippines and heading towards Viet Nam next. The **One ASEAN, One Response** framework guides our responses to disastrous events like these. Under this framework, the AHA Centre is responsible for, and is assisting the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator in mobilising more resources and coordinating coherent and harmonised regional actions on disaster responses.

What are the challenges of responding to disasters during a pandemic?

Secretary-General Lim: COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where overseas travel and supply chain restrictions severely slow down the movement of relief items and international humanitarian workers. Additionally, evacuations were hampered as affected populations could not be transported in large numbers, while evacuation centres could only be filled to half their usual capacity to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease.

Delivering humanitarian response must be innovative and utilise information and communications technology. Cash-based transfers via digital platforms could be another potential use of technology in a disaster-pandemic context. Donors and humanitarian agencies increasingly view cash-based interventions as an important emergency response to meet immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster. Another area of improvement would be communications. As communications infrastructure could be damaged during a natural hazard, it would require innovative solutions to ensure that disaster-prone and disaster-affected communities remain connected.

How would you assess the work that has been accomplished in the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2016-2020? What can be expected from the AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025?

Secretary-General Lim: Recognising that ASEAN Member States are at a higher risk of experiencing and suffering from disasters due to natural and human-induced hazards, ASEAN has laid down a policy framework that mandates the programmatic pursuance of disaster management and risk reduction initiatives at regional and national levels. The **ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)** was ratified by all 10 Member States and entered into force on 24 December 2009. It has two objectives: (i) reduction of disaster losses, and (ii) enhanced regional cooperation in responding to disasters. AADMER is a legally-binding instrument—binding all the 10 countries and serving as a common platform in responding to disasters within ASEAN. The Agreement establishes the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) as the operational coordination body and engine of AADMER.

There is also the **ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund (ADMER Fund)** which was established for the implementation of AADMER. The fund is administered by the ASEAN Secretariat under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties to AADMER. The ADMER Fund serves as a pool of resources to support the implementation of the AADMER work programme, respond to emergencies in ASEAN Member States, as well as for the operational activities of the AHA Centre. It is open to voluntary contributions by ASEAN Member States and other public and private sources, such as ASEAN dialogue partners and assisting (donor) governments.

The ASEAN Committee for Disaster Management (ACDM) will continue to serve as the main driver in the implementation of AADMER, assisted by the five ACDM working groups, the ASEAN Secretariat, AHA Centre, as well as partners and stakeholders.

The ACDM essentially provides leadership and guidance towards fulfilling the aims of AADMER, and oversees the overall implementation of the work programme.

Photo Credit: © ASEAN Secretariat/Kusuma Pandu Wijaya

Through ACDM, we aim to strengthen coordination with other relevant ASEAN bodies, such as through the cross-sectoral coordination platforms we have created. ACDM also intends to invite and engage partners and stakeholders to ensure that the AADMER implementation is inclusive and comprehensive.

> **The most important takeaway from the pandemic is the appreciation of the continuing relevance and importance of regional and global cooperation.**

The ACDM working groups will continue to take the implementation of specific priority programmes. They are expected to review proposals from partners and determine the technical feasibility, before endorsing the proposals to the ACDM. They are also expected to engage with partners at the technical level and invite partners into open sessions of the working groups.

The national disaster management organisations (NDMOs), which constitute the ACDM, will oversee the implementation of the priority programmes at the national and local levels, and institutionalise AADMER at national and local levels.

ASEAN Secretariat will continue to provide policy coordination support to the ACDM as well as assist the ACDM in assessing technical feasibility of proposals submitted by partners, to ensure that they are in line with the priority programmes.

Likewise, AHA Centre will continue to support ASEAN Member States in ensuring collective response and in capacity building, and will assist the working groups on the technical implementation of the priority programes.

Partners and stakeholders are expected to work with ACDM to ensure that their proposed activities contribute directly to the AADMER work programme. To ensure coordination, partners are expected to liaise with the ACDM working groups through ASEAN Secretariat and AHA Centre.

The ASEAN Work Programme 2021-2025 will continue to strengthen the coordinated and coherent regional efforts in disaster management by ASEAN. The work programme will continue to provide a set of concrete actions to assist ASEAN Member States reduce risk and strengthen resilience. It will expand potential collaborations with wider stakeholders. It calls for more innovative methods for disaster risk financing and insurance. It will strengthen alignment with international frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Global 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development. Most importantly, it will bring ASEAN closer towards realising its vision of being a global leader in disaster management.

What strategies or interventions are being implemented at the ASEAN regional level to strengthen the ability of Member States to prepare for, manage, and minimise the effects of both rapid and slow-onset disasters?

Secretary-General Lim: The ACDM, through its five working groups, has developed and implemented various tools, mechanisms, and capacity building initiatives to strengthen the capacity of ASEAN Member States in preventing, mitigating, and responding to the impact of rapid and slow-onset disasters. The development of the **ASEAN Guidelines on Risk Vulnerability Assessment**, enhancement of the **ASEAN Disaster Monitoring Response System**, development of national risk profiles, and strengthening of risk data and information sharing both for rapid and slow-onset disasters have been essential to support the Member States with relevant and reliable information on the particular risks and hazards affecting different countries. Initial risk assessment data and information have proven to be useful to support the preparedness actions and also the development of more proximate scenarios planned under the **ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan** and **ASEAN Regional Disaster Exercise**.

ASEAN has been consistent in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR) into climate change adaptation. It has strengthened institutional capacity and policy frameworks for effective implementation of DRR and climate change action, and undertook various interventions in incorporating DRR into climate prediction, in particular to the flood-prone countries.

ASEAN continuously promotes safe and resilient infrastructure through the ASEAN Safe School Initiative programme, development of guidelines, regional standards, and innovative designs for urban resilience and climate adaptive cities.

With regard to slow-onset disasters such as drought, ASEAN has successfully completed comprehensive studies to identify the potential risks and impact of drought on the region. The study report provided insightful recommendations to ASEAN on how to mitigate and respond to the foreseeable challenge of drought, and led to the development of the **ASEAN Declaration on the Strengthening of Adaptation to Drought** in 2020. A regional plan of action to implement the Declaration is underway, and will provide a stronger foundation for relevant sectors in preventing and responding to the impact of drought in the years to come.

What lessons have ASEAN Member States learned regarding the pandemic and how have these influenced the priorities and initiatives of the ASEAN disaster management sector going forward?

Secretary-General Lim: The **Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019** (14 April 2020) recommended the following seven measures:

(i) Further strengthen public health cooperation measures to contain the pandemic and protect the people,
(ii) Make arrangements to preserve supply chain connectivity,
(iii) Actions are to be based on a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and comprehensive approach by ASEAN to effectively respond to COVID-19 and future public health emergencies,
(iv) Take collective action and coordinate policies in mitigating the economic and social impact from the pandemic, safeguarding the people's well-being and maintaining socio-economic stability,

(v) Enhance effective and transparent public communication involving multiple forms of media including timely updates of relevant government policies, public health and safety information, clarifications on misinformation, and efforts to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination,
(vi) Prioritise the well-being of our peoples in ASEAN's collective fight against COVID-19, and provide appropriate assistance and support to the nationals of ASEAN Member States affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries,
(vii) Support reallocating existing available funds and encourage technical and financial support from ASEAN's partners to facilitate cooperation, including the proposed establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.

The most important takeaway from the pandemic is the appreciation of the continuing relevance and importance of regional and global cooperation. COVID-19 strengthened the unshakeable bond of brotherhood of nations among ASEAN Member States as regional collaboration is necessary to their national COVID-19 containment efforts. COVID-19 has brought the best in ASEAN and its external partners, showing that multilateralism and regional cooperation are ideal approaches to address common challenges.

With reference to the ASEAN Vision 2025, how do you see ASEAN realising the vision of being the global leader in disaster management in the future?

Secretary-General Lim: ASEAN is well placed to become a global leader in disaster management and emergency response, given its vast experience, knowledge, and expertise. These experience, knowledge and expertise need to be leveraged more effectively through multiple avenues including through comprehensive and integrated communications. As we look at ASEAN as an overarching regional governance system, it is important to ensure that the different ASEAN pillars and sectors effectively work together. Furthermore it is important for ASEAN to explore sustainable and innovative ways to transform the way it funds and mobilises resources for disaster management and emergency response as well as enhance its networks with traditional and non-traditional partners. Therefore for the next five years, ASEAN will focus on activities to support the following priorities: (i) knowledge management for regional resilience building, and (ii) sharing of regional knowledge and experiences to demonstrate global leadership in disaster management. ■

Photo Credit: © Department of Public Affairs Office, Office of Civil Defense, Philippines

As Typhoons Hit the Region ASEAN is Prepared to Respond

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DIVISION,ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT
THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

Super Typhoon Goni slammed the northeastern coast of the Philippines on the first day of November. The country's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reports that as of 4 November, the typhoon had caused at least 20 deaths and affected more than two million people in 12 regions.

Goni's strength was comparable to Super Typhoon Haiyan that hit the province of Leyte almost seven years ago. Haiyan affected 16 million people and left over 7,000 people dead or missing. Goni weakened slightly after making several landfalls but still caused significant damage. The Philippine government attributes the relatively low death toll to effective early warnings, preparedness and preemptive evacuation

At a government briefing on 1 November, Philippine Secretary of Defense Delfin Lorenzana, who is also Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management

> **It is crucial for ASEAN to build on preparedness, early warning systems, response measures, and resilience in communities that face the wrath of ferocious typhoons.**

said, "These past few days, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council started preparations for the super typhoon, coordinating with the national government's agencies, as well as local government units situated in the typhoon track to ensure that our people will be taken care of, taken out of harm's way."

Another powerful typhoon, Molave, had lashed the Philippines just days prior, and residents were bracing for the worst. As early as 31 October, the NDRRMC was on red alert, and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) prepared for a potential response. Stockpiles were ready to be deployed from the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA) warehouse based in Manila.

Relief operations are ongoing in the hardest-hit provinces in the Bicol region and southern Luzon.

Typhoon Goni's path of destruction continues to the Mekong Delta region, which also had been earlier hit by Molave and three other storms, all in just one month—Linfa, Nangka, Saudel. Linfa caused flooding and destruction in Lao PDR, while Saudel brought flash floods to 19 provinces in Cambodia. Viet Nam has been hit by all four typhoons, with Molave the strongest it has felt in two decades.

The Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VNDMA) says the total damage has yet to be assessed. "From mid-September up to now, four storms and two tropical depressions occurred in a row, caused heavy rains on a large scale in the central provinces of Viet Nam. High floods caused deep inundation, flash floods, and landslides occurring on a large scale. Hundreds of people are dead or missing, and about seven million are affected. Thousands of hectares of rice and crops were damaged; millions of cattle and poultry, hundreds of hectares of aquatic products were lost; many roads, bridges, and many irrigation, electricity, and telecommunications works were damaged, collapsed."

AHA Centre delivered aid and relief goods that had been stored in a DELSA warehouse in Subang, Malaysia. The government of Viet Nam, with the support of development partners, the United Nations, and other international organisations organised three flash assessments teams to gauge the needs of five affected provinces. Coordination was done through the Disaster Risk Reduction Partnership, established in October 2019, that facilitates information sharing and coordination with partners in disaster risk reduction in Viet Nam.

"The Disaster Risk Reduction Partners and international agencies have taken timely and practical actions to support the people in Central Vietnam in facing the difficulties caused by natural disasters. The total amount committed for support is more than 9 million US dollars, and including the immediate and prompt support from ASEAN and the Japan International Cooperation Agency as soon as the disaster occurred," the VNDMA added.

More severe weather disturbances are expected in the region as a result of climate change and other environmental factors. It is crucial for ASEAN to build on preparedness, early warning systems, response measures, and resilience in communities that face the wrath of ferocious typhoons. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management Response and ASEAN 2025 Vision for Disaster Management and One ASEAN, One Response are the most important frameworks for coordinated responses and long term disaster risk reduction in the region. ■

11 October
Tropical Storm Linfa pummels Viet Nam

The government sends a mission to the central provinces and calls for in-country assistance

12 October
Linfa causes 11 deaths and displaces 33,000 people in Viet Nam

In Lao DPR, one person dies and almost 8,000 are displaced

14 October
Linfa and another tropical storm, Nangka, kill 28 people and floods an area of 8,539 hectares

15 October
Widespread flooding, landslides in multiple provinces of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam

Warnings and instructions of preventive measures are spread through text messages, social media

19 October
VNDMA Coordination Meeting with international organisations

21 October
Tropical Storm Saudel hits Cambodia and causes flash floods

Cambodia's NCDM distributes relief assistance and conducts response operations

27 October
Typhoon Molave lashes the Philippines, at least 775,513 people affected, 22 dead, and 39 injured

28 October
Molave pounds Vietnam, leaving 38 dead and 132 injured

2 November
Super Typhoon Goni wreaks havoc in the northeastern Philippines

Sources: NDRCC, Philippines; VDNMA, Viet Nam; AHA Centre

ASEAN ASPIRES TO BE THE GLOBAL LEADER IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

KY-ANH NGUYEN
DIRECTOR, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE, ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

Southeast Asia is one of the world's most disaster-prone regions in the world. From 2012 to 2018, 1,218 disasters occurred in the region, causing an estimated yearly damage of 15.9 billion US dollars, three times ASEAN's collective annual GDP.

These disasters led to almost 30,000 deaths and affected more than 190 million people in the past decade. The magnitude of losses in lives and economies must be reduced.

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management

To meet the challenge, ASEAN has developed several frameworks and mechanisms to manage and reduce disaster risks and strengthen cooperation among its Member States. This framework aims to strengthen ASEAN's collective efforts in reducing disaster risk and enhance ASEAN's coordinated response in emergencies. The most significant is the **ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)**, adopted in 2009. AADMER is a legally binding agreement that serves as the legal backbone for the ASEAN disaster management sector. The agreement is implemented through the AADMER work programme which runs on a five-year cycle. The next iteration of the work programme, AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025, is expected to be adopted this year and will lay out the ASEAN disaster management sector's strategic priorities over the next five years.

The **ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management** outlines the strategic direction of the ASEAN disaster

Super Typhoon Goni damaged thousands of homes and buildings in the Philippines' Bicol region

Photo Credit: © Department of Public Affairs Office, Office of Civil Defense, Philippines

The ACDM is guided by a common vision of "A region of disaster-resilient nations, mutually assisting and complementing one another, sharing a common bond in minimising adverse effects of disasters in pursuit of safer communities and sustainable development."

management sector. The vision of the ASEAN Ministers in charge of disaster management is to realise ASEAN as a global leader in disaster management by 2025. Towards this end, the ASEAN disaster management sector is coherent in its priorities and activities committed under the AWP's aegis to meet this regional agenda.

In September 2016, the ASEAN Leaders signed the **ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response** to increase the speed, the scale, and the solidarity of ASEAN's response. The declaration was inspired mostly from the lessons and experiences gained from ASEAN's response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 in the Philippines. One ASEAN, One Response is an open and inclusive platform which utilises ASEAN's disaster response coordination principles, framework, and mechanisms, to respond to disasters in the region and outside the region as one. The **ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)** supports the operationalisation of the One ASEAN, One Response approach.

AADMER Implementation Arrangements

The ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) is the leading coordinating body and the main driver in implementing the AADMER work programme. The ACDM is guided by a common vision of "A region of disaster-resilient nations, mutually assisting and complementing one another, sharing a common bond in minimising adverse effects of disasters in pursuit of safer communities and sustainable development." In this regard, the ACDM focal points, comprising of the heads of the respective ASEAN Member States' national disaster management offices, provide strategic guidance in the regular review, monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation of the strategic components of the AADMER work programme. The AHA Centre serves as the operational engine to the AADMER and is also tasked to support the ASEAN Declaration's operationalisation of One ASEAN, One Response. Under the ACDM, subsidiary thematic working groups have been organised to lead the technical implementation of the AADMER work programme based on the respective priority programmes.

The ACDM has made significant progress by developing disaster management tools and capacities, conducting simulation exercise, and disaster relief operations. To name a few, the **ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP)**, the **ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP)**, and the **ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT)** are among the notable achievements. With support from the ASEAN dialogue partners and other partners' organisations, various guidelines, policy dialogues, research studies, and capacity building activities have also been implemented.

To strengthen its cooperation with various range of partners, the ACDM established different platforms including the AADMER Partnership Conference, the ASEAN-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management (ASEAN-UN JSPADM), the ASEAN-International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Coalition on Resilience, and ASEAN-International Committee of the

Photo Credit: © Philippine Coast Guard

The Philippine Coast Guard helps about 128 families evacuate from Buhi, Camarines Sur, before Super Typhoon Goni pummels the province on 1 November

Photo Credit: © sutawijaya/Shutterstock

Pekanbaru, Riau, 1 July 2020
The governor of Riau inspects preparations of a forest fire service unit

Red Cross (ICRC) Joint Platform. To engage civil society organisations, ASEAN established the AADMER Partnership Group and also ACDM-Civil Society Organisations partnership frameworks. To improve multi-sectoral coordination and synergies among ASEAN-related mechanisms, the Joint Task Force to Promote Synergy with Other Relevant ASEAN Bodies on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (JTF on HADR) is convened regularly.

The AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025: Integrated and Proactive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

The AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025 sets the strategic and practical direction for ASEAN to support the realisation of the ASEAN vision of more inclusive and resilient communities. Through mutual assistance and complementarity with the global frameworks, the new work programme emphasises multi-hazards, localisation, innovation, synergy and social inclusion in all stages of disaster management. It also focuses on disaster risk assessment and monitoring, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into climate change adaptation, advancing disaster-responsive social protection, and resilient infrastructure. It strengthens the existing ASEAN response mechanisms of standby arrangements, enhances preparedness of logistics and information management systems for large scale disasters, and fortifies institutional frameworks for more effective recovery. The AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025 will support continuous innovation through knowledge management, which will eventually support ASEAN's goal to become a global leader in disaster management by 2025.

ASEAN as the Global Leader in Disaster Management

ASEAN has also developed coherent, coordinated, and strengthened emergency response, increased provisions of disaster risk assessment and early warning systems, and built the capacity of the Member States. The AHA Centre has significantly strengthened and ensured coherence and coordination in disaster response. Moving forward, ASEAN will work towards better integration of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and future shocks such as pandemics and multi-hazards considerations. The goals are to increase investments for resilience in disaster prevention and mitigation and ensure to "build back better" in recovery and reconstruction. ASEAN will ensure coherence between its work programme in the next five years, with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals. ASEAN wishes to share its vast experiences within and beyond the region while continuing to build trust and capacity in disaster management. We believe that all of these will pave the way forward to realise ASEAN as the global leader in disaster management. ■

SLOW-ONSET DISASTER VS. SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTER

SLOW-ONSET DISASTER
Disaster that emerges gradually over time

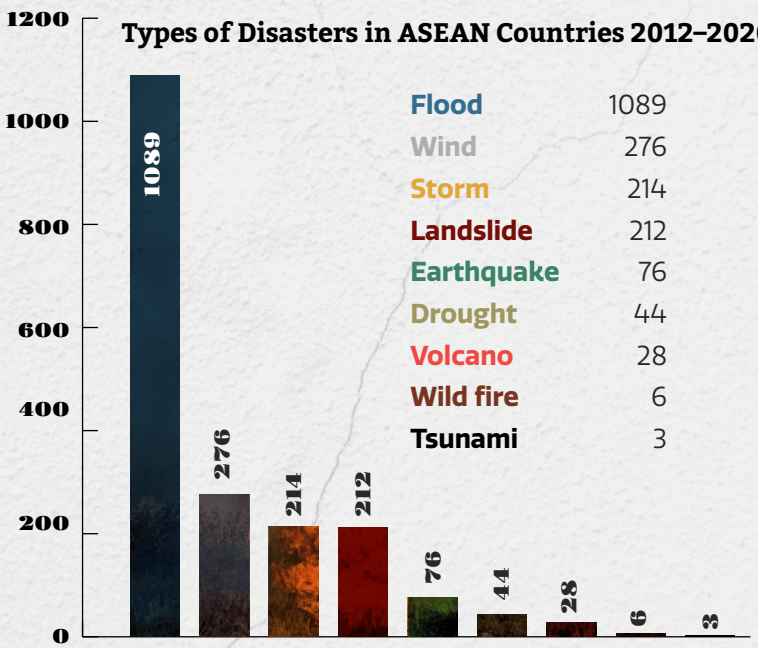
Includes drought, desertification, sea-level rise, epidemic disease

SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTER
Disaster triggered by a hazardous event that emerges quickly or unexpectedly

Includes earthquake, volcanic eruption, flash flood, chemical explosion, critical infrastructure failure, transport accident

Source: UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Types of Disasters in ASEAN Countries 2012–2020



Flood	1089
Wind	276
Storm	214
Landslide	212
Earthquake	76
Drought	44
Volcano	28
Wild fire	6
Tsunami	3

Source: *ASEAN Disaster Information Network, Jan 2012-24 Sept 2020*

Average Annual Loss from Disasters as a Percentage of GDP, by Country

Lao PDR	Cambodia	Philippines
8.7	8.0	6.7
Viet Nam	Myanmar	Thailand
6.2	5.6	3.0
Indonesia	Malaysia	Brunei
2.7	1.9	0.6

Source: *The Disaster Riskscape across Southeast Asia, UN ESCAP, 2020*

CAN ASEAN RESPOND TO A SLOW-ONSET DISASTER?

ADELINA KAMAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASEAN COORDINATING CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT (AHA CENTRE)

"One ASEAN, One Response" is far from just a tagline. It is a well thought out concept born out of a necessity to connect the real disaster experience from ground zero to the highest level of the diplomatic arena in ASEAN. It was borne from ASEAN's experience in its response to the 2013 Super Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful tropical cyclones known to mankind that killed more than 6,000 people in the Philippines.

Typhoon Haiyan's devastating impact urged ASEAN to rethink, reorganise and recharge its regional response and prompted the ASEAN Leaders to sign and issue the **ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region**.

A regional response's true essence embodies a sense of togetherness, a united approach, and concerted action by the organisation to help one or a few. In ASEAN, it is about the 10 countries coming together to support their members whenever calamities strike them. While a collective response reflects solidarity, the speed and scale of the actions constitute the essential bedrock of "One ASEAN, One Response."

What does it take to make a regional response work? Coordination is the foundation of a collective response. In ASEAN, there needs to be established features for regional coordination to drive an effective collective response. The first is a functional organisation that is in charge of the coordination. Through the Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response backed by two agreements ratified by all

Relief items distribution in response to the Lao PDR floods in 2018

Photo Credit: © AHA Centre

Photo Credit: © AHA Centre

The aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines 2013

> **The state-of-the-art ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre at the AHA Centre serves as the regional nerve centre during a collective disaster response.**

the ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Leaders appointed the **ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)** as the primary regional coordinating agency for disaster management and emergency response. The **ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP)** provides guidelines on the dynamics and synergy of all parties in joint disaster and relief operations.

The availability of a plan that synchronises all parties' direction is another essential component of a collective response. The **ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan** is developed before a disaster strikes and made known to all parties involved. This plan provides predictability and a basis for the regional response.

The state-of-the-art ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre at the AHA Centre serves as the regional nerve centre during a collective disaster response. It provides another crucial element to disaster and humanitarian operations—a common operating picture of an ongoing disaster to ensure that all parties are equally informed and able to effectively conduct regional collaborative planning and decision making. The AHA Centre produces and provides data, information and updates on ongoing and past disasters. It has also conducted innumerable coordination meetings to support and facilitate regional decision-making processes and actions.

The final feature of an effective regional collective response is the joint operation capability on the ground, where real action and tangible impact take place. The **Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA)**, functions as a coordinating hub and the home for ASEAN's response on the ground. The joint operation capability is mostly supported by ASEAN's homegrown response team, the **ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT)**, and the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA), which is backed by a network of three warehouses in the region.

Initially, the AHA Centre's contribution to an emergency response was often measured by the speed at which AHA Centre's personnel and ASEAN-ERAT teams were deployed on the ground and the value of relief items they distributed to affected populations. The Central Sulawesi response in Indonesia marked the first time the AHA Centre was designated by the affected country to support the coordination of incoming international assistance, highlighting its role as the primary

Top
The AHA Centre Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) situation room

Bottom
The Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) coordination with the local authority and partners during the Central Sulawesi response in 2018

Photo Credit: © AHA Centre

regional coordinating agency. This sets a precedent for AHA Centre's function in other regional disaster response operations in the future.

The Central Sulawesi response also provided an important lesson that while the AHA Centre has evolved and progressed significantly as the primary coordinating agency, it has not fully accessed all required resources and capacities available in the region. ASEAN's collective response should go beyond mobilising existing resources managed by the AHA Centre, such as DELSA regional stockpiles and the ASEAN-ERAT. Partnership with non-traditional humanitarian partners, such as the private sector, should also be intensified.

While there has been much progress in ASEAN's disaster response and humanitarian assistance, the regional response for slow-onset disaster has not been tested. The existing mechanisms for preparedness and collective response have been designed, tested and improved for rapid-onset disasters that arrive with no or little warning, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, and those that arrive with a few days' warning, such as floods and storms.

A slow-onset hazard develops over long periods, often neglected until late in its development, with no instant destruction to infrastructure and immediate displacement. Drought is often referred to as the classic example of a slow-onset disaster. It continues to be underestimated due to its unnoticeable development and often indirect consequences. The challenges and complexities in monitoring drought have magnified its threat since its effects are cascading, wide-ranging, recurrent, and can last for several months and even years. The main challenge with monitoring drought is that drought triggers and thresholds are not as defined as other hazards. For the past eight years, the total number of droughts recorded in the AHA Centre Disaster Information Network database is 46 events, affecting 7.6 million people and representing two per cent of all disasters recorded out of around 2,100 total disasters in the region affecting 67 million people.

A slow-onset disaster is an anticipated event, so there is an opportunity to develop and build anticipatory responses to it. Anticipatory actions can be planned and launched even before disasters happen. The One ASEAN, One Response can be further enhanced towards building a better and safer ASEAN Community. Collective anticipatory and early action can reduce, even prevent losses in lives and property from disasters of all kinds. ■

For more information about the AHA Centre, visit:

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READY FOR THE DRY YEARS: REGIONAL ACTION TO ADAPT TO DROUGHT

ARMIDA SALSIAH ALISJAHBANA, PhD
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)

Photo Credit: ©UNESCAP

Over the period 2015-2020, Southeast Asia faced its most severe droughts in decades, with devastating impacts. No country in our region has been spared. If not for the COVID-19 pandemic, our news headlines would have been dominated by drought impacts and recovery.

As the COVID-19 pandemic dominates the news and our collective consciousness, the need to ramp up drought action has become even stronger. For up to a quarter of our region's populations living in drought hotspots, drought is not an isolated event; it is just one of many other interrelated pressures on their health and livelihoods. This was starkly highlighted by the onslaught of the pandemic, which threatened people's health, livelihoods, and food security and slowed down drought response and recovery and pushed national economies into recession, and diverted government resources to other emergency socioeconomic priorities.

Although a less visible hazard than earthquakes and storms, agricultural drought dominates the disaster riskscape of Southeast Asia. ESCAP's *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* 2019 shows that it accounts for over 60 per cent (approximately 51 billion US dollars) of the average annual loss due to all disasters of the entire region. Critically, these economic impacts fall disproportionately on those with the least capacity to cope, including people living in poverty, dependent upon subsistence agriculture, and suffering from malnourishment.

With the climate crisis upon us, the adverse impacts of drought will become even more severe if no actions are taken. ESCAP's subregional and country-level engagements seek to support governments to turn the cyclical and slow-onset nature of drought into an opportunity to take risk-informed measures to strengthen the capacity of institutions, sectors, and populations to adapt. We seek to ensure that policymakers have all the evidence and skills they need to make informed decisions that strengthen climate resilience through our intergovernmental platforms, policy research, and capacity building functions.

Environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction are among ESCAP's priority focus areas. We are mobilizing regional cooperation to make science, technology, innovation, geospatial data, and statistics available to all countries. In 2019, the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction operationalised a regional cooperation mechanism to strengthen flood and drought early warning under the Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network. The objective is to harness advances in climate science, geospatial modelling, and big data analytics to support countries. Additionally, the longstanding ESCAP Regional Drought Mechanism brings the data and expertise of space-faring nations to others that are highly exposed to drought. Field efforts are underway in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Viet Nam to build national capacities to apply these technologies for monitoring the onset and progression of drought to inform operational interventions.

As the United Nations and ASEAN deliver their Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management, we are increasingly witnessing a growing recognition amongst ASEAN policymakers that tackling drought requires cross-sectoral cooperation. Encouraged by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), we have broadened our subregional policy engagement beyond the disaster management sector. The *Ready for the Dry Years* report series,a joint work by ESCAP and ASEAN under the auspices of the ACDM, is part of the broader effort to mobilise cross-sectoral support for drought action across agriculture, disaster management, energy, environment, finance, planning, science, and technology. The series provides the evidence base of how and where droughts happen, maps recurrent hotspots across Southeast Asia, and proposes a series of proactive solutions for reducing drought risk.

The second edition, which is due for release in the lead up to the 37th ASEAN Summit in November, recommends three

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tracks for transformation—reduce and prevent droughts from occurring; prepare and respond to droughts when they happen; and restore and recover after a drought has passed. The accompanying measures will not only help to avoid losses but will also bring many positive economic, social, and environmental benefits.

With the notable exception of the COVID-19 pandemic, drought is perhaps the only hazard that has simultaneously affected all countries in Southeast Asia on a massive scale. We therefore commend the Socio-Cultural Community of ASEAN for the timely efforts being taken to develop an ASEAN-wide approach to drought through an ASEAN Declaration and its translation into a regional plan. Regional cooperation can enable all countries to benefit from the wealth of scientific, technological, and development expertise across the region and beyond.

As its trusted partner, ESCAP stands ready to support ASEAN in mobilising large-scale collaboration amongst Member States, development partners, and stakeholders to tackle the transboundary drought challenge.

As its trusted partner, ESCAP stands ready to support ASEAN in mobilising large-scale collaboration amongst Member States, development partners, and stakeholders to tackle the transboundary drought challenge. The stimulus packages being rolled out by governments to revive their economies present opportunities to invest in drought adaptation. We must use every opportunity to get ready for the dry years ahead. ■

The Ready for the Dry Years report will be available at:
https://www.unescap.org/publications/ready-dry-years-building-resilience-drought-south-east-asia-0.

MYANMAR UNIFIED PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK APPLICATION:

A DECISION SUPPORT TOOL FOR RISK INFORMED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Photo Credit: ©Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Myanmar

Myanmar, which has a very long coastal line at 2,228 kilometers, is mainly exposed to water-related disasters. The decade before Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in 2008, large-scale disasters had been occurring in three- to five-year intervals.

Since the cyclone, there has been a major disaster almost every year on average over the past 10 years. And since 2018, about two major disasters have struck yearly. This clearly demonstrates that the disaster risks are growing and getting more complex these days. Out of those significant disasters in the last two decades, 80 per cent are caused by water related hazards.

In the wake of the catastrophic Cyclone Nargis, the Myanmar government has taken various measures towards disaster risk reduction and management. Aiming to make long-term investments in disaster risk governance, the government drafted the Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (MAPDRR) in 2010. By implementing the very first MAPDRR, partnership and coordination amongst the local, national and international stakeholders had been remarkably strengthened. In 2017, with the changes in development landscape and governance structure, MAPDRR has been reformulated

Opposite page
Hands-on exercise for MUDRA platform

Top
Staff training on the background and application of MUDRA platform

Bottom
Dissemination of MUDRA platform at an e-Government initiative

envisioning protected lives, economy, heritage, and environment, through an inclusive approach and geared towards sustainable development in Myanmar.

Development of MUDRA and its Applications

Under the MAPDRR (2017), one of the 32 priority areas focuses on understanding disaster risks by undertaking a national comprehensive multi-hazard and probabilistic risk assessment. In line with the national priority, the project on "Strengthening Climate and Disaster Resilience of Myanmar Communities" was implemented to contribute to a disaster risk modelling for three major hazards; cyclones wind, storm surge, and riverine floods at the national level. In this connection, developing the Myanmar Unified platform for Disaster Risk Application (MUDRA) was led by the Department of Disaster Management of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in collaboration with other technical agencies and with technical support from the Asian Development Bank and financial assistance from the government of Canada.

MUDRA provides a decision support tool to government agencies and other disaster risk reduction practitioners to collaborate, share, and apply disaster risk information in the pursuit of risk informed development. Currently, MUDRA includes three priority hazards but intends to incorporate more hazard information in the future to be able to design a multi-hazard risk information platform. Modelling work was undertaken by Deltares (the Netherlands) in partnership with Royal Haskoning DHV, Wageningen University & Research, and OneMap to support the GIS platform. It is hosted in the OneMap Myanmar Portal with the intent of having an integrated platform across sectoral bodies and sharing the data among them. Modelling work started in February 2019 and it was undertaken through hands-on trainings, working sessions, technical meetings, and workshops. It contains hazard modelling, exposure modelling and vulnerability or damage functions (Technical Report, 2019).

Hazard Modelling

The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology of the Ministry of Transport and Communications has led the hazard modelling work along with other technical agencies. The probabilistic risk modelling approach has been adopted with a range of possible scenarios across the return periods (1 in 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 years). Hazard modelling is also tasked for two climate change scenarios with Representative Concentration Pathways 4.5 and 8.5 for year 2040 and 2080 in accordance with the projections estimated by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology and Environmental Conservation Department. It allows the users to understand the possible risk scenarios and potential impacts triggered by the changing climate.

Exposure Modelling

It is one of the most important aspects of risk modelling with more than 18 line departments sharing their data for exposure modelling. The current exposure data set covers population (disaggregated by age, sex, disability), types of housing, crops, livestock, school locations, warehouses, embankments, dams, cyclone shelters, high-ways, village connection roads and etc. Overall, 60 layers of data under seven components are made available in the exposure modelling. Moreover, the Department of Disaster Management has coordinated a field survey of 400 existing multi-purpose shelters in Ayeyarwady Region which enables the platform to provide detailed attributes of the cyclone shelter locations and their conditions.

Vulnerability Modelling

Vulnerability modelling or damage functions indicate the damage ratio for various intensities of the hazard (damage vs. wind speed or damage vs. water depth). One of the main challenges in the advanced model is that there is no recorded data for damages on housing, agriculture, and other sectors from small and medium scale disasters. Thus, in consultation

with sector departments, the additional surveys to collect detailed damage data for housing, agriculture, livestock, and aquaculture from recent floodings in Ayeyarwady, Mon, Magway and Sagaing Regions were carried out.

> More importantly, risk modelling work helps disaster managers become aware of the potential impacts of disasters in light of future climate projections.

Contribution of MUDRA

MUDRA was built with six main indicators and nine sub indicators derived from the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction seeking to quantify disaster risk. Risk can be explored at the township level which is the fundamental administrative unit for different return periods and for climate change scenarios. The development of MUDRA has strengthened the capability of government officials to analyse risk and apply Geo-informatics in their primary work. The use of MUDRA has contributed to better planning, with the government prioritising limited resources based on needs and emerging risks. It offers user-friendly maps and curves for improved visualisation in disaster management and development plans. Depending on the risk landscape, effective risk reduction measures in sectoral and localised development endeavors can be undertaken.

Location specific risk data and information are critical to understanding climate and disaster risk and further taking the necessary actions on preparedness, prevention, response, and mitigation. More importantly, risk modelling work helps disaster managers become aware of the potential impacts of disasters in light of future climate projections. Based on the findings of the risk modelling platform, exposed populations, critical infrastructure, livelihoods, vulnerable groups, GDP can be projected, making the platform an indispensable tool for risk-informed decision-making. The results of the disaster risk modelling are available at the online interactive portal (*https://www.mudra-ddm.info*) (Policy Notes, 2019). To sum up, MUDRA will be able to support the exchange of disaster risk information among agencies in Myanmar, to promote a culture of risk-informed development and contribute to the implementation of the MAPDRR and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. ■

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Viewpoint:

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK ON FINANCING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING

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What are the financial and development implications of natural disasters?
The financial and development implications of disasters caused by natural hazards are vast and linger well beyond the disaster events. Due to their location, countries in the ASEAN region are among the world's most disaster-prone countries, with high likelihood of their economies being severely impacted by disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, tropical cyclones (typhoons), floods, landslides, and droughts. For example, in the Philippines, the average annual cost of disasters is estimated at 0.7 per cent–1.0 per cent of GDP amounting to approximately 3.6 billion US dollars from earthquakes and typhoons. Similarly in Indonesia, from 1999 to 2018, average annual losses from disasters of 1.5 billion US dollars are recorded, affecting 800,000 people per year and 190,000 lives lost in total. Damage caused by disasters has often exacerbated poverty and inequality in Southeast Asia, as the poor and vulnerable are always more disproportionately affected. Further, in some instances, the poorest parts of the affected countries in the region are more disaster-prone.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has provided disaster and emergency relief assistance but in light of the increasing threats like climate change and pandemics, how have financing and loan modalities shifted over the years? Has funding for disaster risk reduction programmes increased?
ADB has been a strong and reliable partner to ASEAN Member States in times of disaster and has extended significant and timely disaster response over the past three decades. Our response after some of the most devastating disasters is noteworthy, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in the Philippines in 2013, and the 2018 earthquakes and tsunamis in Lombok and Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. ADB provided 0.4 billion US dollars in grants and 1.7 billion US dollars in long-term loans to help rebuild after these disasters. It is also worth noting that ADB set up the Asian Tsunami Fund in 2005, the first of its kind for any international financial institution with all grant resources.

ADB has also supported pandemic response in the region, for example, the 2005 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak. However, the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been and continues to be a lesson to us all—governments, development partners and NGOs—in our individual and collective response to what is an unprecedented global disaster. ADB's COVID-19 response in Southeast Asia has been rapid, robust and impactful. It included 5.375 billion US dollars of COVID-19 pandemic response operations (i.e., the COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Programs), emergency social assistance and health support loans, emergency health grants, emergency food assistance and knowledge support grants. ADB's support focused on three crucial areas: (i) supporting healthcare responses to save lives; (ii) supporting the poorest and most vulnerable suffering severe economic hardship; and (iii) addressing the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on businesses and economies to help countries rebound after the crisis. The next phase of ADB's support will focus on vaccine access, which is critical to preventing the continued loss of billions of dollars to economies.

Before the recently approved contingent disaster financing loans totaling 1 billion US dollars, namely, the Disaster Resilience Improvement Programs to Indonesia and the Philippines (*ex ante*), ADB's support to its Southeast Asia developing member countries had been primarily reactive (*ex post*). ADB, other multilateral and bilateral development institutions have become even more responsive to the impact of climate change which is set to increase the frequency and severity of extreme climate events in the future. Rapid demographic and economic growth in hazard-prone areas, including coastal cities are also expected to increase exposure to natural hazards, contributing to continuing high levels of disaster risk.

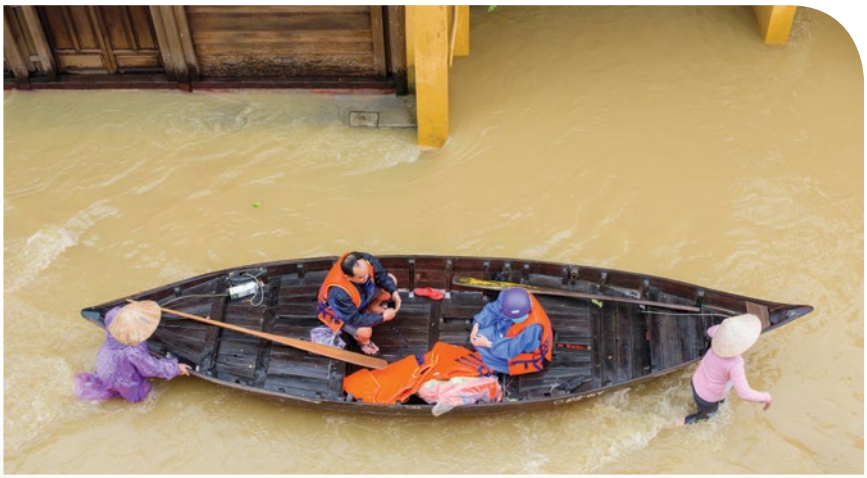


Photo Credit: © NguyenQuocThang/Shutterstock

It is also worth noting that ADB set up the Asian Tsunami Fund in 2005, the first of its kind for any international financial institution with all grant resources.

What approaches or strategies can increase the capacity of national and local governments in Southeast Asia to meet immediate post-disaster and long-term reconstruction funding needs?

Disaster risks cannot be completely eliminated. However, there are several layers to mitigating disaster risk through financing solutions, depending on the severity of impact and frequency of the hazard events. Understanding the "risk layering" approach to disaster risk financing helps governments to determine or develop their national disaster risk financing strategies; it also helps development partners to strengthen their support to governments in addressing disaster risk.

One layer is risk retention. Instruments in this layer address medium frequency and medium severity events, for example, ADB's contingent disaster financing (CDF), World Bank's development policy loan facility with a catastrophe deferred drawdown option and JICA's Post-Disaster Stand-by Loan, as well as emergency assistance loans for immediate needs and for long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction using build-back-better principles. ADB's CDF fulfills the dual objectives of supporting fundamental disaster risk reduction and health reforms and providing quick-disbursing financing for disaster and pandemic preparedness and response.

Another layer is risk transfer which consists of insurance and insurance-linked securities such as catastrophe bonds. An example is the ADB-supported proposed innovative city parametric disaster insurance scheme (initially designed as a pool) which will provide parametric insurance to Philippine cities for typhoon and earthquake cover. The Philippines has also recently issued catastrophe bonds. Insurance is a useful instrument for financing reconstruction and rehabilitation, enabling governments to access rapid post-disaster liquidity and spread the costs of recovery and reconstruction over time. Provision of post-disaster financing provides opportunities to build back better and enhance resilience to future hazard events and emergencies. Public infrastructure replacement costs are likely to increase with climate change, thereby causing additional burden on public expenditure at national and subnational levels.

Can you elaborate on the role of the private sector in disaster risk financing? What financing tools have been made available and how do they contribute to the financial resilience and recovery of disaster-affected communities, such as farmers/fisherfolk, micro/small-scale entrepreneurs, homeowners?

Private sector involvement is critical for disaster risk, especially in the insurance sector. The participation of the private insurance sector can be promoted in two ways:

(i) By using insurance as an instrument to strengthen the fiscal resilience of local governments to disasters triggered by natural hazards, including the protection and rehabilitation of public and private infrastructure, restoration of livelihoods in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and local economic recovery, there will be more opportunities for the private insurance sector. Establishing national and subnational government insurance schemes provides the local private insurance sector and institutional investors an opportunity to develop and participate in innovative insurance and reinsurance products to respond to disasters e.g. indemnity insurance, parametric insurance, insurance-linked securities and other capital markets instruments.

(ii) A key priority of many ASEAN governments is to promote private insurance for low-income households, and agriculture and fishery micro, small and medium-sized enterprises—which are particularly vulnerable to slow-onset disasters like droughts. This is an area that ADB is keen to support and link to microinsurance and financial inclusion reforms under our policy-based programs and potentially lead to investment projects.

What are the barriers to disaster risk financing? What have been the challenges and lessons learned over the past two decades, due to the onset of large-scale disasters in the ASEAN region, like the Aceh tsunami, super typhoon Haiyan and Palu earthquake?

A major barrier to effective disaster risk financing in the ASEAN region is the lack of diversification of support through the

implementation of broad country risk financing frameworks where various instruments complement one another. Further, coordination and capacity constraints that are likely to delay intergovernmental fiscal transfers during an emergency should be addressed; policy reforms should focus on enhancing long-term resilience to natural hazards and pandemics to reduce their social, health, and economic impact; and policy-based operations for disaster support should focus on sectors where investment loans are provided and ADB has experience, to ensure that constraints are addressed by relevant policy reforms. A key lesson learned from ADB's disaster-related support for the aforementioned disasters is that effective post-disaster infrastructure reconstruction requires careful assessment, planning, and preparation if the needs and priorities of reconstruction are to be properly addressed.

How does ADB's Strategy 2030 intersect with the disaster riskcape agenda of ASEAN and in what ways can ADB support ASEAN's priorities and needs?

As the disaster risk landscape or "riskscape" in the ASEAN region becomes increasingly complex, disaster risk reduction needs to be strengthened to address extremities. Recent natural hazards in Southeast Asia have comprised droughts, flash floods, and seismic disasters, with agricultural droughts resulting in large economic losses and low levels of socioeconomic development and having the highest economic impact within Southeast Asia than across the entire Asia-Pacific region.

ADB's Strategy 2030 has several operational priorities that support ASEAN's agenda in addressing this increasingly complex disaster riskscape. The third operational priority of ADB's Strategy 2030 focuses on tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability. The fourth operational priority is making cities more livable; in particular, ADB will help cities explore new and expand existing sources of funding, enhance inclusive and participatory urban planning, and integrate climate resilience and disaster risk management considerations into urban planning processes. In line with these operational priorities, ADB can support ASEAN countries to develop new technologies which incorporate disaster risk and early warning information from past, present and future timescales into decision-making. Finally, ADB will continue to support the strengthening of regional cooperation to address shared vulnerabilities across Southeast Asian countries. ■

Photo Credit: © Frans Delian/Shutterstock

On 26 December 2004, a 9.1 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra island in Indonesia. It generated a massive tsunami that reached as far as South Africa. Almost 230,000 people were killed.

Since then, governments and aid organisations have prioritised disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

Indonesia: 165,708 dead, **532,898** people affected, **4.4 billion** US dollars in damages

Thailand: 8,345 dead, **8,457** injured, **67,007** affected, **1 billion** US dollars in damages

Malaysia: 80 dead, **767** injured, **4,296** homeless, **5,063** people affected, **500 million** US dollars in damages

Myanmar: 71 dead, **12,500** injured, **3,200** homeless, **15,700** people affected, **500 million** US dollars in damages

Source: Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université Catholique de Louvain

ASEAN TRAINING CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

ANOTHAI UDOMSILP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASEAN TRAINING CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Countries around the globe face various types of catastrophic disasters. Tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, cyclones, typhoons, floods, drought, and other climate change-related hazards are among the most common natural disasters. Their intensity and unpredictability have resulted in great loss of lives and damages to property and infrastructure.

The ASEAN region is by no means safe from natural disasters. According to recent statistics, seven out of 10 ASEAN Member States are ranked globally as being highly or even very highly exposed to natural disasters.

Member States experience different types of natural disasters at different scales and frequency. Thus, it follows that they have different levels of knowledge and understanding about specific disasters. Thailand, for example, did not have much experience about tsunamis until giant waves from the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami first hit the Andaman Coast in the southern part of the country in December 2004. It was only after the tragedy occurred that the Thai public began to realise the terrifying

Photo Credit: © RAMAZAN NACAR/Shutterstock

Photo Credit: © spotters_studio/Shutterstock

devastation that tsunamis could cause and started learning how to protect themselves against a tsunami event.

Realising that natural disasters are borderless and can devastate multiple countries at the same time, ASEAN Member States have come up with a number of mutually agreed policies, joint measures, and collective efforts to protect the people and reduce the disaster losses of the region as a whole.

As a result of the **ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response**, or **AADMER**, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, known as AHA Centre, was established. Most recently, in October 2020, the association launched the ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience.

In essence, the guidelines demonstrate the linkages between social protection and disaster risk management, and elaborate on how social protection programmes and systems contribute to disaster response. These are precisely the kind of knowledge that social work practitioners must possess.

To enhance the understanding of ASEAN social workers on disaster-responsive social protection, as well as the post-disaster social resilience, the newly established ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare (ATCSW), located in Thailand, is now in the process of formulating relevant technical and training curricula. The planned courses cover the subject areas of disaster risk reduction, social protection, and assistance to disaster victims. As the centre attaches importance to the up-skill training courses on information and communication, it intends to offer such courses as social workers as citizen media, and communication and information cooperation with mainstream media organisations and online media content providers. All these courses will equip social workers with the necessary skills to help people in emergency situations.

Apart from the above proposed courses, ATCSW is designing another curricula that will include courses such as global social work and social welfare and human trafficking, as well as online training course on protection of children in the context of migration. It is our strong belief that such curricula will help enhance the efficacy of social work practitioners as a whole.

The ATCSW expects to commence its training courses, both on-site and online, in 2021. ■

To complete the curriculum design process, the ATCSW looks forward to receiving inputs, recommendations, and suggestions from all experts, academia, stakeholders, partners, as well as readers of The ASEAN magazine.

The ATCSW can be contacted by email at ATCSW.Thailand@gmail.com. *All contributions are most welcome.*

ATCSW is located at Happiness Social City in Bang Lamung, Chonburi Province, in the Eastern region about 130 km. from Bangkok.

SAFE SCHOOLS AND CHILD-CENTRED CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



RENAR BERANDI **VANDA LENGKONG** **NGHIA TRINH TRONG**
PLAN INTERNATIONAL ASIA-PACIFIC

Four ASEAN countries are among the top 10 most affected by impacts of climate-related loss events from 1999 to 2018, according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020. Climate change causes slow onset effects, such as sea-level rise, drought, food insecurity, and infectious diseases, and intensifies cyclones and floods.

Evidence also shows that these shocks take their toll on children, particularly girls, through harmful practices like child marriage, gender-based violence, education disruption, and undernutrition. Plan International found that water scarcity and prevailing societal norms require girls and young women in North Central Timor, in Indonesia, and Northern Thailand to participate in agricultural labor and water collecting. These create a double burden for girls and often disrupt their education. Girls are more likely to drop out of schools than boys during and post-disasters.

The impacts of disasters are complex and intertwined with poverty, the current pandemic, conflicts, and differential access to resources. Plan International stands on its focus to protect girls' rights by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and strengthening community resilience. Its safe school and child-centred climate change adaptation (4CA) programming and partnership work on several fronts to develop the capacity of children and the community to overcome shocks and stresses while fulfilling their human rights. The approach includes multi-risk education, the promotion of girls' leadership, youth activism, green life skills, and accountable government policies.

Girls demonstrate basic first aid techniques to students of San Is, Samar, Philippines

Photo Credit: © Plan International Philippines

In ASEAN and Beyond: Fostering Collaboration and Supporting Governments in their Safe School and Climate Change Policy Implementation

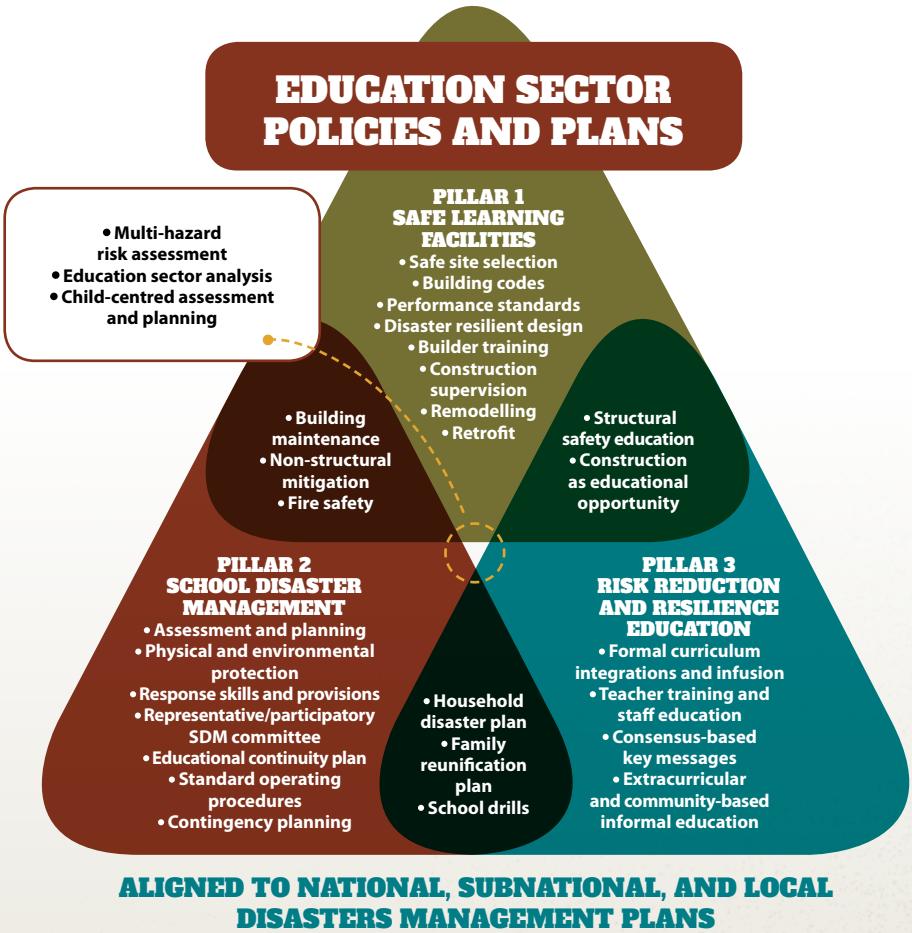
Plan International in Asia leads a consortium that supports the implementation of the ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative (ASSI) prioritised in the **ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme** and the **ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020**. It supports ASEAN Education and Disaster Management authorities to set up a regional cross-sectoral coordination committee, develop the ASEAN Common Framework on School Safety, and create a knowledge platform.

At the national level, the consortium engages with governments through a coordinating platform in eight countries, including Indonesia's National Secretariat for Safe Schools, Thailand School Safety Network, Disaster Management Secretariat in Cambodia, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service in the Philippines, for policy development and implementation of the safe school projects.

ASSI contributes to wider coalitions like the Asia Pacific Coalition for School Safety, the Global Alliance on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector, Children in Changing Climate Coalition. In these networks, stakeholder groups exchange technical expertise and develop policy briefs to ensure that the aspirations of the youth—girls and boys—are incorporated in governments' policies. One of the platforms used is a regular conference where decision-makers interact with the youth at national, regional, and global levels.

At its Core: Working with Girls and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Climate and Disaster Risks in Schools and Communities

In the flood- and tropical storm-prone Samar province in the Philippines, Plan



International works with girls and boys to conduct the Student-led School Watching and Hazard Mapping (SWERT) programme, in accordance with Department of Education regulations to improve students' level of awareness of the potential hazards of climate change and disaster risks, and how to address them. It includes life-saving capacity and gender-transformative approach training and provides equal opportunity for girls and boys to join SWERT. This initiative challenges the male-dominated sector of hazard mapping and promotes girls' leadership in an emergency context. The youth also engage with their barangay or village councils and share activities in their schools that can be replicated by their respective barangay youth councils.

In the Lembata and North Central Timor regencies of East Nusa Tenggara province in Indonesia, the 4CA programme resulted in girls and boys leading these projects: installation of water dripping irrigation; rainwater harvesting; coastal greening' water-based planting; seawater distillation; child-centred advocacy to allocate funds for village level-climate change action programming in Lembata; and integration of climate change action curriculum into formal and non-formal education.

For 4CA and safe school programming, Plan International has operated in seven countries in the Southeast Asia region (including Timor Leste), in partnership with donor agencies, authorities, local communities, and schools. It is anchored in educating girls, young women, and boys in most-at-risk communities, strengthening their capacity and holding accountable the society and duty bearers. It promotes youth activism and advocates governments to adopt a gender and inclusive lens in their disaster risk reduction and climate change action policies and implementation.

Ways Forward for a Resilient Region that is Gender-Transformative

Adhering to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, which envisions to move the region towards an inclusive and resilient community, Plan International recommends the following to be prioritised by the ASEAN Member States:

- Allocate funding to invest in girls' and boys' resilience in informing, influencing, leading, and monitoring decision-making on climate action and disaster risk reduction;
- Integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change action curriculum into the education system, supported by comprehensive data on different risks and ensure all data are collected and presented by sex, age and disability;
- As multiple risks affect the region, build multidimensional and multi-stakeholder alliances to avoid the escalation of harmful gender norms in times of crisis while ensuring the equitable and continuous access to essential services for girls and boys;
- In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, encourage girls' and young women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes and recognise that outbreaks, quarantines, and isolation affect girls and boys, women and men differently. ■

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We strive for a just world, working together with children, young people, supporters and partners. Using our reach, experience and knowledge, we drive change in practice and policy at local, national and global levels. We are independent of governments, religions and political parties. For more than 80 years, we have been building powerful partnerships for children and are active in more than 75 countries.

Link 1 Link 2

***More information about the ASSI is available on* www.aseansafeschoolsinitiative.org**
Download Because We Matter from:
(https://aseansafeschoolsinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/PI_STC_BecauseWeMatterPolicyBrief-FINAL.pdf)

INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AS BOTH TARGETS AND AGENTS OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

ASEAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (AICHR)

Women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters. This statement is as irrefutable as it is disquieting.

Consider this: in some disaster-prone communities, boys are taught to swim at an early age, while girls are not (IUCN Fact Sheet on Disaster and Gender Statistics, 2009). Without this life-saving skill, girls can be left defenseless and at serious risk from disasters like flooding. This is just one example, but it speaks of a larger issue of gender exclusion that can put women in harm's way. We believe that addressing gender exclusion, among other factors, will not only benefit women, but also society at large.

Gender is inextricably linked to disaster preparedness and response. Women carry out community disaster preparedness initiatives because, more often than not, they tend to be at home when disaster strikes. Calamities expand women's domestic care roles. Women and children make up most of those internally displaced by natural disasters, which leave them vulnerable to different forms of exploitation and violence. And following a disaster, the burden of reconstruction and healing typically falls on women's shoulders.

Despite this, women are rarely included or represented in disaster policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Across ASEAN, natural disasters and extreme weather events have directly and indirectly curtailed a broad range of human rights recognised in the **ASEAN Human Rights Declaration:** the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, water and sanitation, health, housing; the right to social security; the right to development; and women's rights.

The destruction of people's physical assets and means of livelihood due to natural hazards, coupled with the adverse effects of these hazards on institutions and systems critical to the delivery of basic rights such as shelters, schools, hospitals, and roads to name a few, contribute to the decline of the standards of living of vulnerable populations, including women and children.

> **For women to have meaningful participation in disaster preparedness and response, countries should create spaces for their inclusion in decision-making and recognise their potential as community leaders.**

As ASEAN moves towards a region-wide response to natural disasters, understanding the state of institutional interactions between gender and natural disaster responses and its possible impacts on human rights deserve more attention in the regional discourse.

To fill this knowledge gap, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) commissioned a thematic study entitled "Women in Natural Disasters: Indicative Findings in Unravelling Gender in Institutional Responses." The study sought to examine the integration of a gender approach and the protection of women's rights in ASEAN's regional disaster strategic and institutional responses.

Guided by an institutionalist perspective, the study examined institutional instruments (i.e. laws, regulatory framework, and action plan) and infrastructures (i.e. management structure and capacity at all levels) that respond to natural disasters and emergencies. The study also included-country specific reviews and fieldwork conducted in all ASEAN Member States. As a result, it provided an evidence-based and insightful analysis of a diverse landscape of policies and practices on the perceived role of women, their participation, and the protection of their rights in situations of natural disasters.

The study highlighted efforts by Member States to mainstream gender in natural disaster institutional infrastructure and mechanisms—with some countries fairly more advanced in their efforts than others.

The pattern of state-level responses to women's concerns in periods of natural disasters reflects how individual states perceive women. On one hand, women are seen as either a vulnerable segment of the population or agents of change, or a combination of both. On the other hand, they are viewed in the same way as the rest of the population, with states not recognising women's different needs or capacities. These perceptions feed into and affect the strategic, tactical, and operational governance of natural disaster response initiatives at the planning and implementation

Mainstreaming gender in natural disaster responses

Mainstreaming gender in the natural disaster's emergency preparedness and response architecture essentially means:

- being conscious of gender-sensitive initiatives in the various stages of humanitarian assistance—early relief, protection, recovery, and rehabilitation
- taking stock of gender-specific needs and concerns of the affected population
- applying the gender lens in vulnerability assessments, emergency preparedness programs, and post-disaster/emergency reconstruction programmes and initiatives.

levels. Ultimately, they impact the state's capacity to guarantee, promote, and protect women's human rights before, during, and after natural disasters.

The study also documented best practices in gender mainstreaming in natural disaster responses, particularly those that provide spaces for women's participation. It discussed how women's human rights can be further promoted and protected during natural disaster situations.

The study's key findings on institutional infrastructure and mechanisms are as follows:

- Framing institutional and governance responses to natural disasters depends on its impact upon societal systems. For example, when heavily affecting the economy, the frame employed is related to sustainable development or climate change adaptation, and the focus is on building the resilience of the most basic unit of its society, more akin to self-help. On the other hand, when there are little or no risks of natural disasters, the frame used is emergency/crisis response, in connection with national security.
- All Member States have established disaster management institutional infrastructures, as embodied by national bodies for disaster coordination and response. Natural disaster infrastructure and mechanisms follow the governance architecture of each of the countries. At the strategic level, all Member States recognise the importance of community implementation.
- Several countries, such as Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam, have national laws specific to natural disasters. Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore have specific policy directives on natural disasters. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand have their natural disaster national/strategic action plans.

In terms of mainstreaming gender in laws, policies, institutions, and practices, the following are some of the salient findings:

- Integrating the gender approach into the meta-frames of sustainable development, climate change, and/or national security depends on the following: (a) the maturity of gender mainstreaming in the whole governance architecture; (b) the extent to which gender is recognised as an issue; and (c) the discursive construction of women in these societies. Accordingly, the propensity to apply women's human rights in difficult circumstances also depends on the synergy between gender and disaster response.
- Furthermore, appreciation for women's participation varies. At its most basic, women participate as information providers to vulnerability assessment and post-disaster needs audit, and as information recipients of disaster/emergency preparedness. Nevertheless, at a substantive level, they are recognised and are asked to contribute more meaningfully in the strategic, tactical, and operational stages of response mechanisms—preparedness, early relief, recovery, and rehabilitation.
- Women's specific concerns, such as sexual and gender-based violence, violence against women and girls, women's economic and political empowerment, are difficult to bring to the surface, discuss, and view as a

Recommendations for regional actions:

On gender mainstreaming	On women's participation and protection of rights
1. Operationalise commitments set forth in ASEAN instruments on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children, the Vientiane Declaration on Enhancing Gender Perspective by drafting an ASEAN Resolution at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting for the integration of the gender approach in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, sustainable development, and national security frameworks.	1. Develop an ASEAN inter-governmental program on the leadership and empowerment of women relevant to natural disaster and emergency/crisis preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation.
	2. Develop a regional quick response mechanism to assist natural disaster-affected ASEAN Member States in efforts to provide gender and culturally sensitive early relief initiatives.
2. Call for cooperation between ASEAN human rights bodies— namely, the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)— and relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies such as the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to create a Regional Technical Working Group on Women in Natural Disasters as well as draft a Regional Action Plan on Women in Natural Disasters.	3. Establish a gender-balanced and gender sensitive regional quick response team composed of trained humanitarian personnel, medics, engineers, midwives, among others.
	4. Establish a network of experts on gender equality, climate change and disaster response; also establish an inter-sectoral body called the Regional Technical Working Group on Women in Natural Disasters to develop evidence-informed policies to respond to the different facets of women's human rights in the context of natural disasters and emergencies/crisis situations.
	5. Develop an ASEAN inter-governmental program on the leadership and empowerment of women relevant to natural disaster and emergency/crisis preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation.

Recommendations for actions at the national level/to ASEAN Member States

On gender mainstreaming	On women's participation and protection of rights
1. Encourage ASEAN Member States to apply the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the harmonisation of the framing of natural disaster and emergency/ crisis preparedness	1. Guarantee the substantive and inclusive participation of women and girls in the drafting and/or implementation of laws, policies, and/or strategic plans on disaster risk reduction and management.
2. Strengthen their practice of gender mainstreaming in their respective institutional infrastructure and mechanisms on disaster risk reduction	2. Institutionalise the participation and leadership of community women in all phases of natural disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation by involving them in the planning, programming, early warning and early relief, and post-disaster initiatives.
3. Ensure the development of guidelines and checklists on natural disaster and emergency/ crisis preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation with gender components for the use of practitioners.	3. Target the increase of women's involvement as decision-makers, trainers, and first responders in the natural disaster and emergency/crisis institutional architecture.
4. Develop and/or strengthen gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive training programs on natural disaster and emergency/crisis preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation across the institutional infrastructure, different levels of implementation, and catering to both civilian and military responders to disaster situations.	4. Draft and/or implement laws, policies, and/ or strategic national plans specific to the protection of women and girls during natural disaster situations.
	5. Conduct exchange/learning activities and cooperative capacity development trainings to prevent sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the context of natural disasters and other humanitarian emergency situations. Exchange/learning activities should also include gender-sensitivity training for military forces as first responders in disaster situations that may be conducted by civil society, humanitarian assistance groups, and/or experts on disaster-related SGBV and VAWG.
	6. Practice gender-disaggregated data collection for populations affected by natural disasters.
	7. Apply gender analysis in the conduct of vulnerability and post-disaster assessments, as well as in contingency planning for emergency preparedness and response.

matter of concern in natural disaster and emergency/crisis institutional infrastructure and mechanisms.

- Only two ASEAN Member States, namely, Cambodia and Indonesia, have explicitly combined gender in their policy directive and/or national plans. The efforts of each ASEAN Member State on mainstreaming gender in their natural disaster institutional architecture and instruments may be categorised into "incipient efforts" (where mainstreaming is recognised but not yet institutionalised at the strategic level), followed by "modest efforts," then "moderate efforts" and "strong efforts" (where gender mainstreaming is evident at both strategic and operational levels).

According to women in communities and non-government actors in different countries, the study echoes their suggestion to mainstream gender, not just by reflecting it in the strategic and operational plans, but more so, by actually implementing it on the ground.

As all ASEAN Member States recognise the importance of community-level participation in natural disaster response and preparedness, the inclusion of women in the planning and implementation processes should be given particular attention. The strategic imperatives are a matter of institutional commitment, and concretising these imperatives at the local level is also of paramount importance.

For women to have meaningful participation in disaster preparedness and response, countries should create spaces for their inclusion in decision-making and recognise their potential as community leaders. The traditional societal roles of women need not limit them to subordinate positions, as they can draw from these roles and experiences to lead in the provision of early relief, recovery, and rehabilitation from natural disasters.

The study's findings also shed light on particular patterns of practice at the ground level which can inform the design of natural disaster and emergency/crisis institutional governance. These pertain to women's contribution to early warning and prevention, the intersection of gender and culture in disaster relief and response, gender dimensions of migration, and women's access to resources in post-disaster situations, to name a few.

The study concluded with key recommendations aimed at improving gender mainstreaming, women's participation, and rights protection in institutional responses to natural disaster. At the regional level, there is a need to consolidate the gains from and collectively strengthen institutional infrastructure and mechanisms on gender and natural disasters in all Member States. Towards this, the study proposed mapping out a general framework on women in natural disasters in the region as a possible initiative. A draft text for an ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Women in Natural Disaster Contexts should be explored to serve as a regional policy guide. If this regional action plan on women in natural disasters is adopted, it will be strategic since ASEAN will be the first regional organisation in the world to pioneer this initiative. ■

The AICHR thematic study is available for download at the following link
https://aichr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Adopted_AICHR_Thematic_Study_Women_in_Natural_Disasters_26012018.pdf.

MAJOR DISASTERS, 2006-2020

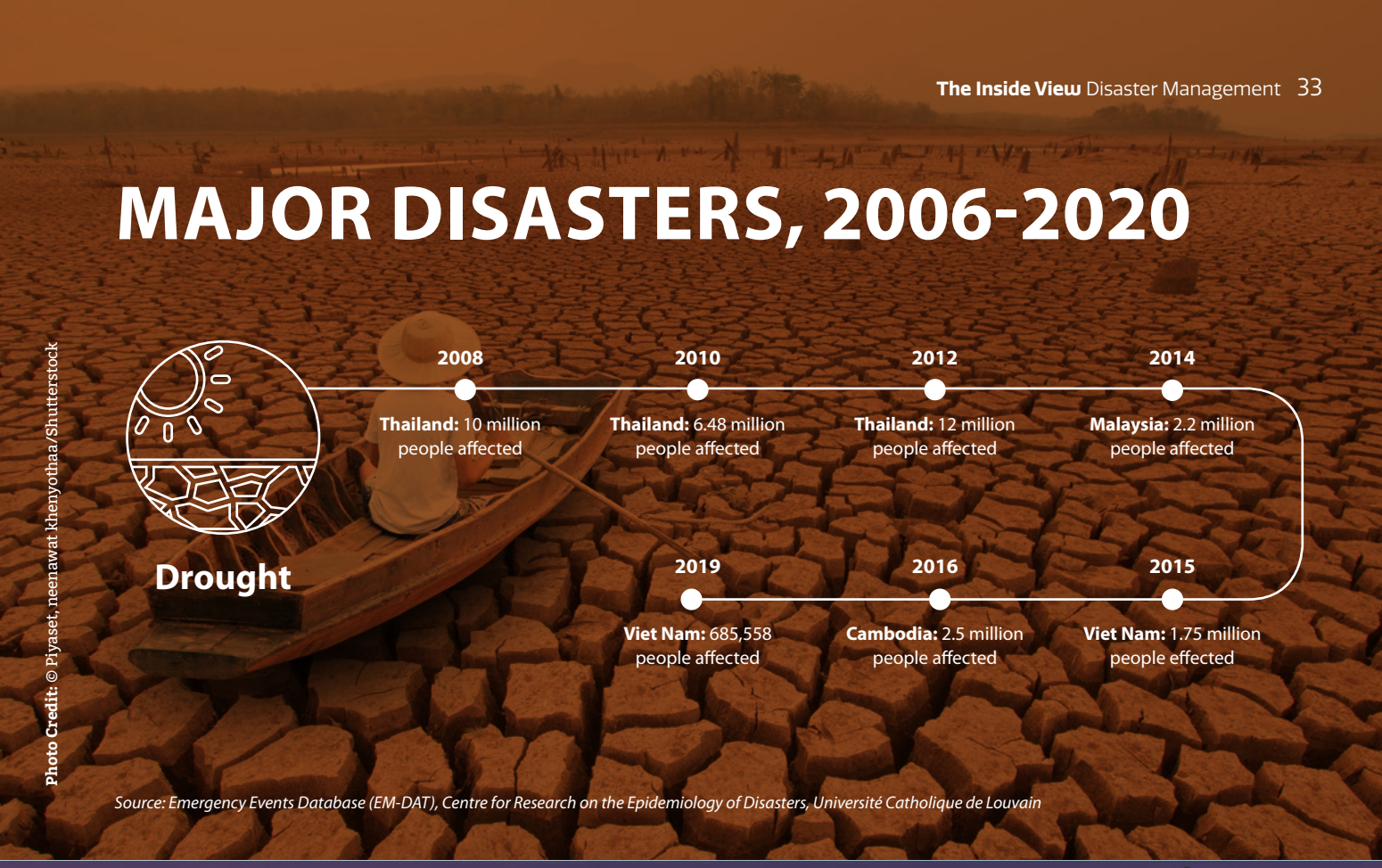


Photo Credit: © Piyaset, neenawat khenyothaa/Shutterstock

Drought

2008
Thailand: 10 million people affected

2010
Thailand: 6.48 million people affected

2012
Thailand: 12 million people affected

2014
Malaysia: 2.2 million people affected

2015
Viet Nam: 1.75 million people effected

2016
Cambodia: 2.5 million people affected

2019
Viet Nam: 685,558 people affected

Source: Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université Catholique de Louvain

Floods

2010
Riverine flood, Thailand: 8.9 million people affected, 258 dead

2011
Floods in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam: 3,000 dead, millions affected

2013
Flash flood, Lao PDR: 350,000 people affected

2014
Flash flood, Cambodia: 472,500 people affected, 45 dead, 57,950 homeless

2015
Riverine flood, Myanmar: 1.6 million people affected, 149 dead

2016
Flash flood, Myanmar: 852,227 people affected, 19 dead

2016
Riverine flood, Viet Nam: 659,615 people affected, 35 dead

2017
Flood, Philippines: 1.5 million people affected, 9 dead

2017
Riverine flood, Thailand: 1.8 million people affected, 96 dead

2018
Flood, Myanmar: 109,650 people affected, 16 dead

2019
Flash flood, Indonesia: 501,110 people affected, 66 dead, 110 injured

Sources: Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université Catholique de Louvain; AHA Centre

Typhoons

2010

Typhoon Conson (Basyang)
Philippines: 585,383 people affected, 146 dead, 91 injured
Viet Nam: 1,500 people affected, 11 dead

2011

Tropical Storms Haima and Nok Ten
Lao PDR: 429,954 people affected

2011

Tropical Storm Washi (Sendong)
Philippines: 1.1 million people affected, 1,439 dead, 6,071 injured

2012

Typhoon Bopha (Pablo)
Philippines: 6.2 million people affected, 1,900 dead

2013

Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)
Philippines: 16 million people affected, 7,354 dead, 28,689 injured
Viet Nam: 900,000 people affected

2014

Typhoon Rammasun (Glenda)
Philippines: 4.65 million people affected, 111 dead, 1,250 injured

2015

Typhoon Koppu (Lando)
Philippines: 2.9 million people affected, 51 dead, 83 injured

2016

Tropical storm Aere
Viet Nam: 610,000 people affected, 34 dead

2017

Tropical Storm Kai-Tak (Urduja)
Philippines: 1.86 million people affected, 91 dead, 78 injured

2017

Typhoon Damrey
Viet Nam: 4.3 million people affected, 123 dead

2018

Super Typhoon Mangkut (Ompong)
Philippines: 3.8 million people affected, 84 dead, 138 injured

2019

Typhoon Kammuri (Tisoy)
Philippines: 2.6 million people affected, 4 dead, 318 injured, 342,165 people homeless

2020

Typhoon Goni (Rolly)
Philippines: 1.47 million affected, 11 dead, 2 injured

2020

Typhoon Molave (Quinta)
Philippines: 775,513 affected, 22 dead, 39 injured
Viet Nam: 38 dead, 132 injured

2020

Tropical Storms Linfa, Saudel, and Nangka
Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam: 1,13 million people affected, 138 dead, 24 missing

Sources: Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université Catholique de Louvain; AHA Centre; National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Philippines

Earthquakes and Tsunamis

2006

Magnitude 6.4 earthquake, Yogyakarta, Indonesia: 5,778 dead, 137,883 injured, 699,295 people homeless, 500 million US dollars in damages

2009

Magnitude 7.6 earthquake, Padang, Indonesia: 1,195 dead, 1,798 injured, 2.5 million people affected, 2.2 billion US dollars in damages

2012

Magnitude 6.7 earthquake, Negros Oriental, Philippines: 113 dead, 6,000 houses damaged, 320,165 people affected, 8.9 million US dollars in damages

2016

Magnitude 7.0 earthquake, Sumatra, Indonesia: 104 dead, 857 injured, 85,161 people affected, 100 million US dollars in damages

2018

Magnitude 7.0 earthquake, Lombok, Indonesia: 564 dead, 1,584 injured, 70,000 homeless, 445,343 people affected, 70 million US dollars in damages

2018

Magnitude 7.5 earthquake and tsunami, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia: 4,340 dead, 2,531 injured, 206,494 people affected, 1.4 billion US dollars in damages

Source: Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université Catholique de Louvain

Photo Credit: © Dhoni Setiawan; ymphotos/Shutterstock

Conversations

DISASTERS THROUGH THE LENS

Armed with nothing but lenses, photojournalists foray into the unknown to capture and show the world scenes of wreckage, and also human misery, hope, compassion, and resilience. During natural disasters, photography can be a way to provide a sense of scale, while humanising the disasters.

Photo Credit: © Dhoni Setiawan

Dhoni Setiawan, a photojournalist with Indonesia's newspaper *The Jakarta Post*, has covered the aftermath of natural disasters in Indonesia, including the 7.4 magnitude quake that hit Central Sulawesi and triggered a tsunami and soil liquefaction on 28 September 2018. Setiawan stayed in the area for two weeks. "When covering disasters, we must think of the timing, so the photos are up-to-date. For example, I take photos of the damage on day one, of evacuation, scarcity, disaster relief efforts, and shelters condition for the next days," he said.

"But I also find unexpected moments that are worth capturing like when I got a ride on a plane and took the aerial stills of the blackouts in Palu."

Setiawan considered himself lucky to meet a local resident at the airport—the only place where electricity was available—who offered him a place to stay and a ride to go around to search for photos.

In return, as he knew the access to get logistics supply, he tried his best to help the affected residents living in the same area by distributing staple food. ■

With a helicopter, the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) arrives in Donggala regency to distribute food for the affected residents.

Search and rescue teams look for survivors under the rubble in Balaroa village, Palu City. Moments after the strong quake, houses and people in the area were swallowed to the ground because of soil liquefaction.

"I took this picture from a casa plane on the first day I arrived in Palu. Lights were completely out in Palu; you can only see lights from the passing vehicles. I could not find direct flight from Jakarta to Palu, so I flew to Mamuju, West Sulawesi, first. I was lucky as I managed to get a plane ride to Palu, otherwise it would take hours by car."

People wave to a departing military chopper after dropping off logistical support in Donggala. Access to some areas in Palu and Donggala was cut off, delaying the delivery of aid.

Dr. Rangi W. Sudrajat

Humanitarian Aid Worker

Rangi Sudrajat dreamed of being a humanitarian worker since she was a young girl. She decided to pursue a path of helping the less fortunate, after watching the news about refugees affected by the Kosovo war.

Sudrajat pursued a medical degree at Trisakti University in Jakarta, and in 2015 joined Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to realise her dream.

The 31-year-old doctor has been deployed to several refugee camps in Pakistan, Yemen, South Sudan, and Bangladesh. Sudrajat was also one of many medical workers on the ground, treating victims of the earthquake in Palu, Central Sulawesi province, in September 2018 and the tsunami in Banten province in December 2018.

"Palu earthquake was my first mission in Indonesia. My MSF team and I were assigned by the local health agency to help in Sigi regency and worked with a *puskemas* (community health centre) there, but I stayed in Palu City. Normally, it takes 45 minutes from Palu to Sigi, but it took us two hours at that time because the road was damaged.

"I came nine days after the earthquake, but when I arrived in Baluase district of Sigi, there were still many people who needed treatment. With a mobile clinic, we looked for those who needed medical assistance. Of the total 13 villages in Baluase, I only managed to visit two or three villages in a day due to the difficult terrain. I met people with an open wound and had not been stitched, or someone with a bone fracture but not yet referred to any hospital, and other kinds of injury that had not been followed up due to the difficult access. But they were very patient; many of them even had started to rebuild their houses two to three days after the disaster. I think that's the characteristic of people in such a situation—they're resilient.

"We also helped construct a temporary puskemas in Baluase since the original one was destroyed. I drew the blueprint of the puskesmas; where the location of the rooms would be, the delivery room, the pharmacy, etc. I could not stay throughout the whole construction process, but my friends showed me photos when it was completed.

Top

Rangi Sudrajat rides a motorcycle to reach areas that are otherwise inaccessible in the aftermath of Banten tsunami in 2019

Bottom

Rangi Sudrajat attends to a patient during her Central Sulawesi earthquake mission

They also joked that they would name the first baby born in the delivery room after me. It was exciting to know that the puskesmas became a networking place or an information centre for local people and other humanitarian workers.

"I felt a special connection with Palu. It's not that I didn't feel any connection with my other missions, but when it comes to the place you grew up in and the people you grew up with, the sadness you feel becomes worse, but you feel much happier too when you succeed at something. I felt scared too in Palu, of course. After I moved from a tent to a hotel room, I sprinted out of my room when there was an aftershock, but I got used to it after a while.

"I was also anxious when I was deployed for other missions. Yemen was the scariest for me because there was an active war there. But MSF is good at ensuring the safety of their people because if we're not safe, how can we help other people? I've also faced many challenges on my missions. But I manage to keep myself safe with the limited facilities that I have. I appreciate small luxuries that I have during my missions, like taking a shower with liquid soap, or even applying mosquitos repellent.

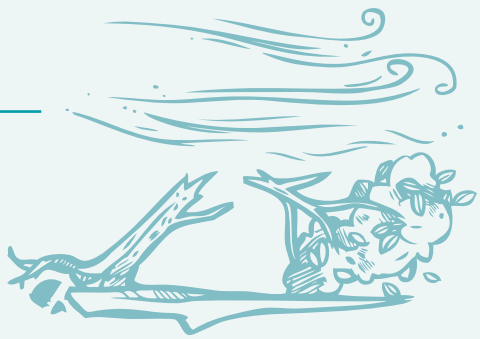
"At first, my family said that I should just pursue a career in Indonesia, but they finally supported me because they knew it's something I'm very passionate about. After five years, there was a time when I wanted to quit so I would not have to leave my family for almost a whole year. But I haven't found something else that I can do with this much passion. And to be honest, I think I'm quite good at this job. It's interesting to see the world from a different perspective. Sometimes I'm wondering which one is the real world, my life here in Bekasi or there with the refugees. This whole thing is an eye-opening experience." ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia. This conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Photo Credit: ©Rangi W. Sudrajat; Sri Harjanti Wahyuningsih/MSF

Rowel Balais

Super Typhoon Haiyan Survivor



When Super Typhoon Haiyan (local name: Yolanda) struck the Philippines on 7 November 2013, Rowel Balais and his family hunkered down in their home in the town of Palo, Leyte province. Along with Tacloban city, it was one of the hardest hit areas by the deadly typhoon. Haiyan affected 16 million people and killed over 7,000.

Photo Credit: ©Rowel Balais

The 55-year-old driver still lives in Leyte, where he says people are still rebuilding their lives but are better prepared for other storms to come.

"We are used to typhoons because we have them every year. We had never experienced anything like Yolanda. My wife and kids stayed with my in-laws that day, so if anything happened, we would all be together. We live in the center of town in Palo, Leyte. The winds were howling so loudly. Roofs were rattling. It sounded like gunfire, like there was a war.

"I didn't realise how bad it was until the afternoon, when we got out of the house. We saw people retrieving bodies. We heard them say, "whole families perished." Bodies started to pile up and there was no place for them to be buried. Many of the dead were buried in shallow graves, near the Palo cathedral. People were walking around looking dazed, looking for food and water. Supplies came in about seven days after the typhoon but we had to ration it. We let the children and elderly eat and drink first.

Top and Bottom
Rowel Balais with his wife and three children

"There are so many stories to tell. My best friend, who lived in Tacloban, lost his entire family. Tacloban and Palo were the hardest hit by Yolanda. He worked as a barker outside the airport and he still works there now but he's alone.

"I have a taxi and thankfully, it wasn't damaged by the typhoon, so I could still work after it passed. I was hired by an international NGO and I drove doctors around Leyte while they did their work. Days after the typhoon, that's when I saw more of the destruction. Food and water were running out, so people started getting hungry and looting stores and warehouses. I saw that but I also witnessed how people came and helped each other out. Shop owners were giving away their stock of canned goods and food. I was able to work with groups that came in to help in the relief efforts. Later, I helped distribute donated supplies to people too.

"People here always say we are used to typhoons. We don't need to evacuate because we need to guard our homes and livestock. When Yolanda was coming, local officials asked residents along the coast to evacuate but many refused to do so. Locals didn't know what a storm surge meant because they used the term "tidal wave". They didn't understand that a storm surge can be dangerous. I think they need to be forced to evacuate. It has to be a forced evacuation.

"Now, people are prepared and each town has an evacuation plan and designated shelters. Before a typhoon comes, we stock up on food, put our clothes in plastic bags. Especially with the pandemic, local health centers and barangay (village) officials are ready to launch evacuation plans. I think people need to be given the proper training and information. How much rice do you need to survive for how many days? Instructions like that.

"It took about four to five years for us to recover from Yolanda. There were houses built for those who lost homes that are inhabitable. To be fair, there are many houses that people now live in." ■

Interviewed by Mary Kathleen Quiano-Castro. This conversation has been translated, edited, and condensed for clarity.

Alex Baluyut and Precious Leano

Emergency Food Aid Providers

Freelance photographer Alex Baluyut and theater actress Precious Leano are the founders of the non-profit organisation, Art Relief Mobile Kitchen in the Philippines (ARMK), that feeds distressed populations in disaster and conflict areas.

The couple first started cooking hot meals for displaced victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan (local name: Yolanda) in November 2013. ARMK has since evolved into an independent movement for food. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have set up a network of mobile kitchens, run by local volunteers and communities in five different provinces.

ARMK most recently provided hot meals for those affected by typhoons Molave and Goni.

Alex: We're foodies. The idea of feeding a lot of people or building an NGO that would feed people in disaster areas was starting to ferment in my mind. And when Yolanda happened, I said this is the time to test that idea, to bring a mobile kitchen, cook for a lot of people.

We decided to bring our whole kitchen to the Villamor Air Base where survivors from Tacloban City were landing on C-130 Air Force planes. I made a call on Facebook that I wanted to cook congee for the displaced and within 30 minutes, someone loaned us a vehicle. Then we received fund donations for rice and chicken.

Precious: It was a motley group of people. Friends responded and all our friends are artists. So, there were photographers, and there were theatre artists who arrived, and painters. For 22 days, 24/7, we were able to gather around 10.2 tons of food and equipment.

In disaster areas, we usually serve meals in bowls. We cook a dish like say, chicken soup (Filipino *tinola* soup). Imagine people, who have just lived through a strong typhoon, smiling instantly as they see smoke and smell the aroma of piping hot soup. Every single time, we see instant smiles. So, that's why our line has always been—let's give them hot, comfort food.

Alex: We give them nourishment but we also give them hope. Their morale is boosted because they know there are people who care for them. For Filipinos, when you cook for them, you become a life-long friend.

Precious: We have cooked in more than 60 disasters, from Batanes (northermost tip) to Jolo (southernmost tip), so practically the entire Philippines. All kinds of disasters, from earthquakes to typhoons and conflicts, both natural and man-made disasters.

Now for this pandemic, we've been cooking for eight months since the lockdown. The kitchens are ready to deploy, anytime

Photo Credit: ©Art Relief Mobile Kitchen

Photo Credit: ©Art Relief Mobile Kitchen

Opposite page
Alex Baluyut and Precious Leano with volunteers of the Art Relief Mobile Kitchen

This page, top
ARMK volunteers in Tandag City, Surigao, Mindanao, September 2015

This page, bottom
Alex Baluyut and Precious Leano help survivors of floods due to monsoon rains, Tumana, Marikina, 13 August 2018

they have equipment. They have dedicated volunteers who are willing to go and set up a kitchen when, where it's needed in their areas. During the pandemic, at one point there were five kitchens cooking at the same time. We see the economic impact of the pandemic. In the low-income communities, where there is no work, and no pay. The hunger is palpable. You can really feel the hunger. If we are able to provide hot meals for three days in a week, that makes a huge difference.

Alex: It has now evolved. Like our crew in this permanent kitchen in this village; they are victims from a fire in February. We cooked meals for them when the pandemic started in March and now, they're the kitchen crew. The volunteers now come from the community. It's more logical to get local volunteers, so we don't have to buy expensive airline tickets and fly them to disaster areas. A big part of our work now is community organising. We bring in two to three people and find volunteers in the community. In our experience, there are always one or two community cooks. That's a sure thing.

Precious: As soon as we start chopping garlic and onions, the smell of aromatics cooking brings people in.

Alex: Volunteer cooks start grabbing the ladle from us and say, "I'll do it," and they never let go. We get offers of help from local government units, private individuals who own big houses, churches. The culture of hot meals for emergency food aid is growing. It has caught on and other organisations have mushroomed and we need to support each other.

Volunteer cooks start grabbing the ladle from us and say, "I'll do it," and they never let go.

Precious: Many of these other organisations are led by former Art Relief Mobile Kitchen volunteers too. There's an innumerable number of disasters in this country, innumerable. So, how long do we plan to do this? As long as we can, the will is always there. So, if there's a will, there's a way. And as long as we get support from the community, from donors outside the community of artists, the community of people who have been following us, we'll be there. We have the will and there will always be people willing to participate in what we do.

Alex: We are learning that in emergency food aid, you really need to have the will. If you have the will, it is always possible to provide hot meals to those who need them. ■

Interviewed by Mary Kathleen Quiano-Castro. This conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Pimvadee Keaokiriya

Development Worker and Researcher

Pimvadee Keaokiriya travels along mountain terrains to remote villages in Lao PDR and Myanmar, working together with rural communities to prepare for natural disasters, such as flooding and landslides.

Living with communities for two weeks for each assignment, she has gained insights on the resiliency of people, especially when dealing with disasters. It has been a profound experience and a meaningful personal journey, as she finds her work in disaster preparedness able to produce tangible results.

Pimvadee Keaokiriya finds addressing disaster risk as one of the tangible ways of seeing and making a difference

"My experience in conducting a few Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Management (CBDRM) exercises show how useful they are. People are so hopeful and they want to make a difference to their communities. They want to be an advocate of change and that is something that makes a big impact for me. I am happy that the work that I do makes a difference for them. Even small scale projects have a profound impact on people's lives.

"We are really working with the vulnerable communities, really hearing the voices from the ground. Through activities to prepare a community disaster risk reduction (DRR) action plan, we hear about the local knowledge on how disasters could be addressed. Interviews conducted enable for understanding on how past disasters have impacted the lives of people in these communities. They inform us on what would be appropriate for their communities, which then gets integrated into the DRR plan. We also learn about initiatives taken such as the setup of a community DRR watch group, which enables them to reduce their risks to future disasters.

"Through CBDRM activities, the community requested the installation of a radio. This would enable warnings to be given in times of flash floods which often result in landslide or mudslides, causing massive destruction and loss of life. The presence of both the community leader and the governor at the workshops we organised enabled this request to be inserted into one of the recommendations of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)'s plan. Bridging the gap between the NDMO in the capital with local communities, such as putting in place an early warning system, it could minimise the possibility and cost of disaster related damage.

"For inclusivity, we request everyone to attend the meetings which are conducted in the community hall. Women attend the meetings; however, they remain seated at the back of the hall taking care of the children. To ensure inclusion, we have separate focus group discussions with the women to understand their roles in times of disasters.

"Disaster is something that is very close to everyone and can happen anytime. We need to be aware and be prepared to respond to it. Although we presume that everyone knows how to respond to disasters, not everyone does. There is a need to challenge social norms that disasters are predestined, which we work hard to do.

"What is needed is awareness. By knowing about a recurring incident such as seasonally heavy rainfall, the community is able to coordinate. For example, a voluntary watch group can be formed to monitor rain gauge. Once it reaches a certain level, announcements can be made over the radio for people to start evacuating to the shelters selected. This enables for people to leave before they become stranded.

"Good interagency coordination is also needed. If the community is strong, people at the national level also need be to be strong. As disasters come under various ministries, strong coordination is crucial. Access to data is much needed to be able to see future climate projection. This will allow the creation of different response scenarios, enabling agencies to prepare accordingly.

"These communities face a dual problem of floods, stemming from the river when it overflows, and also drought. My wish is for lessons learnt in these communities to be replicated in other countries in the region. The community leaders also have the potential to be trainer of trainers for possible future projects. The rivers are a source of life for these communities, let's mitigate its cause as a source of grief.

"Being in these remote areas has also provided a rare opportunity of seeing the conditions of these people, especially the children and schools. Through funds raised, I have bought items needed such as textbooks and stationery. ■

Interviewed by Kiran Sagoo, PhD. This conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Photo Credit: ©Pimvadee Keaokiriya

Shifting Currents

Photo Credit: © Indochina Studio/Shutterstock

A UNION OF CHOICE?

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"Every child has a right to dream, all girls need to study and pursue their futures, and not to become a wife or a mother at a young age. And if they are forced to marry someone, they should know that they have the right to say 'no.' They should discuss with their parents and show determination to pursue their desired pathway in life."

These were the words of 16-year-old Orn, a youth advocate from Thailand, at the **2nd Forum on Child, Early and Forced Marriage** held online on 14 September 2020. The first one was held on 6 March 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) conducted the forums, in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, to raise awareness on child, early and forced marriages. They were meant to facilitate action-oriented dialogue with other ASEAN sectoral bodies and relevant stakeholders for more coordinated and collaborative strategic actions towards eliminating child, early and forced marriage.

The September forum also served as a platform for young women from different ASEAN Member States who are engaged in advocacy work to eliminate child marriage. It was an opportunity to lend a voice to those who have none—girls and young women who are forced into early marriages.

Overview of Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Southeast Asia

For most, marriage is a union of two people, an act of love and a mutual choice and commitment to spend the rest of one's life with another person.

However, when marriage happens "too soon" for young girls and adolescents, their happiness and wellbeing are compromised, the path to their future becomes uncertain, and economic and life opportunities are likely to be altered or lost. Worse, their life may be threatened due to health risks associated with early pregnancy, or intimate partner violence. The consequences of child, early and forced marriage are severe and likely to cause long lasting damage—physically, emotionally, socially, politically, and economically.

Very young Hmong mother carries her son on her back heading home on mountainous road in Mu Cang Chai district

Photo Credit: © Vietnam Stock Images/Shutterstock

Child marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union occurring before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2014). The global scenario on child marriage shows that more than 650 million women living today were married before they reached the age of 18 as of 2018. According to UNICEF, 12 million women marry as children every year.

Child marriage is a reality faced by many girls and adolescents in ASEAN. Children are driven to early and forced marriage and adolescent pregnancies by many complex reasons, often associated with their socio-economic and cultural environment. UNICEF's Global Database 2020 shows that the percentage of ASEAN women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before the age of 18 is highest at 32.7 per cent in Lao PDR, followed by Thailand at 22.5 per cent, and Cambodia at 18.6 per cent. For the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar, the average is 16 per cent, while for Viet Nam, it is 10.6 per cent (Lao PDR MICS 2017; Thailand MICS 2015; Cambodia DHS 2014; Myanmar DHS 2015; Philippines DHS 2017; Indonesia 2017; Viet Nam MICS 2014). While child marriage is decreasing in the region, it remains a serious concern.

Child marriage is a reality faced by many girls and adolescents in ASEAN. Children are driven to early and forced marriage and adolescent pregnancies by many complex reasons, often associated with their socio-economic and cultural environment.

In terms of teen pregnancy and birth, WHO figures show that approximately six million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth in Southeast Asia each year which is equivalent 43 per 1,000 females. This is quite alarming as it is even higher than the global rate at 42.5 (DESA, 2019).

Globally, pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death for 15–19-year-old girls (Neal S, et al, 2015). Adolescent women die during pregnancy and childbirth since their bodies are not yet fully developed and ready to bear children.

Child, Early and Forced Marriage is a Consequence, Not a Choice

A closer look at the situation in ASEAN countries reveal three main factors that force girls and young adolescents into early or forced marriages: (i) traditional child early/forced marriage, (ii) peer-led marriage and cohabitation, and (iii) circumstantial or unintended child marriage.

Customs and traditions in some areas in ASEAN Member States still play a major part in driving children to early and forced marriage. But other patterns are equally important to highlight. Pre-marital sex and an unintended pregnancy from it are often followed by circumstantial marriage. In some cases, the girls are victims of sexual violence and trafficking. Teenage girls may also consent to cohabitation if pressured by peers, or if they do not have a proper understanding of their own sexuality, including reproductive health and rights.

Child, early and forced marriage is perpetuated further by a culture of poverty and economic insecurity; people's mindset and attitude towards adolescence, sexuality, and marriage; lack of education; and absence of guidance or lack of parenting capabilities by parents and guardians.

In all forms of child marriage, girls are denied of their rights to reach their full potential, limiting their capacity "to do" and "to be." When girls and young adolescents are forced into marriage due to lack of opportunities or options for a better life and when they are unable to access gender responsive services, it is an indication of gaps and failures in our society.

As another youth advocate, 21 year-old Ferny from Sasak Panjang, Indonesia said, "I have been actively promoting child marriage prevention since I was 16 years old. At that time, I joined the Bogor District Children's Forum where I learned about child marriage issues."

"Eventually, I discovered that my mother was also a victim of child marriage. From that moment, I became inspired to contribute to preventing child marriage…child marriage continues because there are some children who feel too tired studying due to the uncertainty of the current education system, and because of the influence of the society and media," she added.

Educating and helping young women break the cycle of early marriages in their families are crucial to fixing these gaps in society.

Opportunities to Prevent and Eliminate Child, Early and Forced Marriages

ASEAN firmly believes that it is a manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination structured by social norms, traditions, and beliefs.

Policies can help curb child, early and forced marriage. However, these policies must make girls and adolescents visible in the framework, must be strictly implemented, and must be consistent with other policies such as raising the legal marrying age in ASEAN Member States and improving access to information on adolescent sexuality. Eliminating child, early and forced marriage and adolescent pregnancies in the ASEAN region has become more challenging with the global economic downturn caused by COVID-19 and the major disturbances it has wrought on family and social life, and the new systems of learning. Crisis and emergencies cause people to fall deeper into poverty, which is among the drivers of child, early and forced marriage.

Eliminating child early marriage and adolescent pregnancy demands comprehensive sex education for both young girls and boys that will increase their knowledge about sexuality, intimacy, and relationships, as well as sexual and reproductive health and well-being, including early and unintended pregnancies, among others. A similar course is needed for parents and adults because lack of information, awareness, and understanding on this subject matter can hinder institutional efforts.

ASEAN remains committed to advancing the protection and development of girls and adolescents. It has mainstreamed gender and inclusion in the development and realisation of the ASEAN work plans and initiatives, ensuring investment in girls' empowerment, protection, and development.

Progress towards eliminating child, early and forced marriage as well as adolescent pregnancies shows promising potential in the ASEAN region. This was presented at the launching of the Girls Leadership Index held virtually on 9 October 2020, through the joint undertaking of the ASEAN Secretariat and Plan International. The **Girls Leadership Index** presents reliable data on the status of girls' leadership in 19 South and Southeast Asian countries. It frames girls' leadership in its broader form, i.e. as a concept

that considers a wide array of girls' competencies, skills, and the environmental conditions that support girls' exercise of their agency, including having a voice and participating in their own lives, households and communities. The index is an important tool in efforts to eliminate child, early and forced marriage and adolescent pregnancies in the ASEAN region.

Advancing the Agenda of Girls and Adolescents

Child, early and forced marriage is like an epidemic—it cannot be reversed over a short period of time. Leaving no one behind is an end goal shared by all stakeholders, but this is easier said than done. Sustained inclusive efforts are necessary to transform society and ensure that development is enjoyed by all.

To advance the agenda on the elimination of child, early and forced marriage, guided by the leave-no-one-behind principle, holistic interventions must be grounded on the enabling and constraining social-cultural and ecological factors that affect adolescent girls' abilities to thrive and develop. The drivers of child, early and forced marriage must be determined to ensure that interventions are responsive to this problem.

Current information on child, early and forced marriage must be broadened by doing more research and gathering more evidence on the unique situations and experiences of girls and young adolescents. Comprehensive and accurate data on child, early and forced marriage and pregnancies among young adolescents can help countries tailor their strategies for preventing and eliminating child marriage. The use of the Girls Leadership Index by various development planners and stakeholders is also encouraged.

At the political level, there is a call for a more focused and institutionalised approach to ensure protection of children from child marriage. *Policy interventions need to cover response, prevention, and elimination of child, early and forced marriage across the different life-cycle domains* that are to be adopted at the national level down to the local levels, to sustain government's investments on girls and adolescents.

Photo Credit: © KonstantinChristian/Shutterstock

Education and awareness raising are crucial to combat child, early and forced marriage. Education can alter the way girls (and boys) view marriage, which is often influenced by social norms, beliefs, and traditions. It also arms them with knowledge and skills that will help them make better choices for their future.

Girls and boys must have a critical voice in finding solutions and options and must be actively involved in realising them. Member States must honor their strengths, abilities, and leadership capabilities, being the primary stakeholders and "agents of change" in eliminating child, early and forced marriage, with support from parents, families, and communities. Consultative platforms for girls and adolescents and essential stakeholders must be done from the grassroots level up to the regional level, online and offline.

Increased presence of girls and young adolescents in the digital world must be turned into opportunities for strategic advocacy, education, and increased participation. But extra caution is needed because of the safety risks associated with increased online presence.

"Certainly, our efforts must include awareness-raising, constituency-building, and working with champions, youth movement, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, men and boys and women and girls," said Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi at the 2nd Forum on Child, Early and Forced Marriage.

We must stop pushing our girls into child marriage and early pregnancies. We must not let them suffer from conditions created from the past. Together, we must give them opportunities to develop their gifts and talents, break free from the cycle of poverty, and enjoy life to the fullest.

Investing in girls and young adolescents must be embraced as a strategic initiative towards inclusive social transformation for a future that is of their choice. ■

POVERTY AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A LOOK AT THE "NEW POOR"

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The global economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has plunged a large segment of the population into poverty.

Recent estimates from the World Bank show that between 88 million and 115 million people are in danger of sliding back into extreme poverty in 2020 and another 23 million to 35 million in 2021. Measured by the number of people living on less than 1.90 US dollars per day, extreme poverty is expected to increase for the first time globally since 1998 and set back progress towards ending extreme poverty by at least three years.

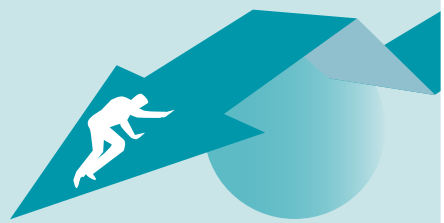
The World Bank's recent forecasts further project around 821 million to 1.16 billion "new poor" people between 2020 and 2030 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The global recession and the pandemic's socio-economic impact on people in ASEAN underscore the need for immediate action to protect the poor. The pandemic has exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of the traditional poor, exposing them to more risks.

Identifying and locating the poor in society—including the risks that compound their existing vulnerabilities, such as rapid urbanisation, continuing informalisation of work, increasing gender inequalities, and the impacts of climate change—are thus one of the foremost tasks of governments.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy

Economic losses from the pandemic will range from 5.8 trillion US dollars (6.4 per cent of global GDP) if conditions normalise within three months, to 8.8 trillion US dollars (9.7 per cent of global GDP) if the pandemic lasts longer than six months.
Source: *Navigating COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank, September 2020*



Economic growth is projected to fall by 5.2 per cent in 2020, the largest drop in eight decades.
Source: *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune, World Bank, 2020*

Global loss in labour income has reached 3.5 trillion US dollars for the first three quarters of 2020 alone, with lower-middle income countries being the hardest hit, following a 23.3 per cent decline in working hours in the second quarter of 2020.
Source: *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work, Sixth Edition, 23 September 2020*

Global remittances are expected to fall by 20 per cent in 2020, costing over a 100 billion US dollars decrease in remittances in low- and middle-income countries.
Source: *World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History, World Bank, 22 April 2020*

The number of tourists is expected to fall by 60 per cent to 80 per cent. In the first quarter of 2020, there are 67 million fewer international tourist arrivals, equivalent to 80 billion US dollars in lost export earnings.
Source: *International Tourist Numbers Could Fall 60-80% in 2020, UNWTO Reports, World Tourism Organization, 7 May 2020*

Poverty Before the Pandemic

Great strides have been achieved in reducing absolute poverty worldwide, although the rate of decline has been slowing down even before the pandemic. The World Bank reported that for the period 2015 to 2017, the number of people living on 1.90 US dollars a day decreased from 741 million to 689 million.

In Southeast Asia, the proportion of population categorised as extremely poor substantially decreased from 30 per cent in 2000 to 5 per cent in 2017 based on the Asia and the Pacific Progress Report 2020. According to the 2020 ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Baseline Report, an average of 13 per cent of the total population among the Member States were living below the countries' poverty lines in 2018. The rate of rural poverty was higher, at 18 per cent.

In terms of the characteristics of the global poor, the World Bank reported that in 2018, two-thirds of the world's poor were young at 24 years old and below; about a third of poor people 15 years old and older had no formal education while another one-third achieved only a lower level of education; and more women and girls experienced poverty across the globe.

Prior to the onslaught of the pandemic, 80 per cent of the extreme poor were residing in rural areas. Most of the poor were working in the agricultural and informal sectors, and were increasingly reliant on remittances from family members who are migrant workers, both domestic and overseas. They tended to have less access to public services, markets, and infrastructure, as well as provisions for health, education, and social protection. They were also disadvantaged by the digital divide.

The urban poor, meanwhile, were living in congested informal settlements. The 1.2 billion people in this category also tended to have limited access to health care and sanitation, nutrition, and infrastructure, among others. With their incomes reliant on an uncertain informal sector combined with their precarious living conditions, the urban poor had a higher risk of falling into deeper poverty.

Economic toll of COVID-19 on women and children

In addition to the estimated 386 million children already in extreme poverty in 2019, another 42 to 66 million children would be pushed into extreme poverty by 2020.
Source: *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children, UN Secretary-General, 15 April 2020*

Approximately 150 million additional children are living in multidimensional poverty—children without access to health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation and housing services.
Source: *Technical Note: Impact of COVID-19 on Child Poverty, UNICEF, September 2020*

Currently, around 60 per cent of children worldwide are not getting an education because of school closures.
Source: *COVID-19 and the SDGs: How the 'Roadmap for Humanity' Could Be Changed by A Pandemic, UNDP*

Women are disproportionately exposed to the impacts of the pandemic. With 740 million women worldwide relying on the informal economy, their income fell by 60 per cent during the first month of the pandemic.

Women in domestic, accommodation, and food services sectors have been hit the hardest: 72 per cent of domestic workers (80 per cent of whom are women) lost their jobs, and the jobs of 75.4 million women in the accommodation and food services sectors are in jeopardy as well.

The pandemic has intensified women's unpaid care and domestic workload. By 2021, around 435 million women and girls will be pushed into poverty because of the pandemic.
Source: *From Insight to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19, UN Women, 2020*

Photo Credit: © Louise Infante/Shutterstock

Pushing People into Poverty

Of the 110 million to 150 million people projected to fall into extreme poverty by 2021, around 72 million are likely to come from middle-income countries. If the higher poverty thresholds are applied—3.20 US dollars a day for lower-middle-income countries, and 5.50 US dollars a day for upper-middle-income countries—the poor population will be far greater, according to World Bank.

Profiling the "new poor," the World Bank said that this segment falls between the chronic poor and the non-poor; that is, the new poor were just living above the poverty line prior to the pandemic, and they are more likely to be educated than the chronic poor, employed and working in the informal sector in urban areas. Since 95 per cent of COVID-19 cases occurr in urban areas, the pandemic has impacted the urban poor the most, especially those working in the informal sector and living in informal settlements.

The people likely to join the ranks of the new poor are those living in densely populated urban settlement in cities with limited or no access to any social security and social protection, nor provisions for health. They are likely to be labourers and migrant workers who lost their jobs or livelihoods because of lockdowns or travel restrictions. Most of them are expected to be women who work in industries, such as manufacturing, garments, and tourism.

Although the profile of the new poor may seem different, the overall profile of the poor remains unchanged.

In general, it is expected that the majority of the world's poor still reside in rural areas. Most will still be smallholder family farmers and informal sector workers. Although many may not be immediately exposed to the COVID-19 itself, its economic impact, such as broken supply chains and suspended travel and tourism, will still hurt the rural poor as well and their ability to cope and recover will be limited because of poverty. It is likely that those residing in urban areas, many of who are migrants, will move back to their homes in the rural areas once jobs become scarce. This in turn may increase the risk of spreading the virus in isolated areas.

COVID-19 is expected to exacerbate pervasive existing inequalities. Since the 1990s, income inequality has increased in most developed countries and in some middle income countries. The UN's 2020 World Social Report says around two-thirds of the world population, around 71 per cent, live in countries where inequality has grown. It is estimated that if the Gini index increases by one per cent in all countries in 2020, around 717 million to 746 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty, according to World Bank.

Poverty is driven even deeper by the impacts of climate change, which is estimated to push around 100 million additional people into poverty by 2030. Extreme weather events caused by climate change may affect the poor's capacity to access food particularly in a situation where the whole economy has been greatly weakened.

Pro-Poor COVID-19 Recovery

The challenges may seem insurmountable but hope lies in developing COVID-19 recovery measures that are inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and, more importantly, responsive to the needs and circumstances of the poor.

Beyond promptly responding to the pandemic, ASEAN has been laying the foundation for a development agenda that can be leveraged to withstand the pandemic's impacts. These policy frameworks range from strengthening social protection, investing in jobs, and developing 21st century skills, among others, to the wider ASEAN Integration initiative. And specific policy guidance on protecting the poor, has been articulated by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication on "Reducing Poverty and Building Resilience: Towards COVID-19 Recovery." Currently, ASEAN is developing an ASEAN recovery framework that aims to be fair, inclusive, sustainable, and that is age- and gender-responsive.

It is incumbent upon decision-makers to protect all the poor—both the "new poor" and the traditional poor—who are further made vulnerable by the pandemic. Poverty data and statistics are critical in the design of evidence-based policies and programmes that are targeted for the poor. Such data will show the pandemic's impacts on the depth and breadth of poverty that other vulnerable groups, such as older persons and persons with disabilities and their families, experience. It is also worthwhile to use a rural-urban lens in framing a holistic, comprehensive, and integrated recovery programme. Lastly, it will be prudent to pursue a recovery programme that will address underlying drivers of poverty, such as inequalities, the intrinsic link between rural and urban areas, informalisation and urbanisation, and the impacts of climate change. ■

Snapshots

FIVE YEARS OF SDGs IN ASEAN: PROGRESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

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In the recently published *Sustainable Development Report 2020*, which tracks countries' progress towards achieving their sustainable development goals to date, most ASEAN Member States have index scores ranging from 60 to 70. The score represents the percentage of measurable SDG outcomes that each country has accomplished, with 100 being the highest, and 0, the lowest.

Rank-wise, six ASEAN Member States are among the top 100 best performing countries, with two Member States, namely, Thailand and Viet Nam, among the top 50 countries.

In terms of overall progress, ASEAN is making significant headway towards reducing poverty, addressing hunger, improving health standards, and increasing access to education. The region is also making satisfactory progress in fostering innovation, building sustainable communities, and addressing the impacts of climate change.

However, challenges remain. According to the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020*, Southeast Asia needs to redouble its efforts in building resilience to disasters, reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, preventing substance abuse, reducing road traffic accidents, and enhancing transport systems. Accelerated efforts are also needed to reduce inequalities and build stronger institutions.

Various setbacks persist that obstruct timely progress, ranging from incoherence in government initiatives, inadequate financial resources, to lack of reliable data to monitor the progress and inform policy making. COVID-19 pandemic certainly has brought about new conditions and negative impacts to most of the goals as urged by the United Nations.

Acknowledging that development gains are being reversed, ASEAN has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the causes that derail SDG implementation. A series of symposiums on SDGs jointly organised by ASEAN, People's Republic of China, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) surfaced the need to establish a stronger basis for financing policies by systematically costing development plans and policies, and establishing comprehensive, long-term financing strategies. At the regional

ASEAN COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING THE SDGs

ASEAN Leaders joined world leaders in adopting the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. The agenda contains 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) which country-signatories aim to achieve over a 15-year period. ASEAN Member States, at the regional and national levels, have taken steps to implement the SDGs and at the same time, realise the objectives of the ASEAN Vision 2025, in light of the complementarities between the two agendas. The year 2020 marks two important occasions: the fifth year of implementation of the SDGs and the start of the Decade of Action, and the mid-term implementation of the ASEAN Community Blueprints which actualise the ASEAN vision.

Source: www.un.org

level, it is proposed that ASEAN establish an integrated national financing framework peer review mechanism, and a knowledge-sharing platform on financing for sustainable development for effective SDGs implementation. Countries in the region also need to foster the enabling environment for coherent, cohesive, coordinated policies across government agencies and levels of governance. It is also crucial that they continue to translate global goals and integrate them into local plans and practices. Lastly, countries must harness partnerships and invest in innovation for successful realisation of the SDGs.

ASEAN Platforms for Cooperation on SDGs

ASEAN has established several platforms to advance SDGs cooperation. The **ASEAN Forum on SDGs with National Development Planning Agencies** is regarded as one of the major platforms contributing to strengthening regional strategies on SDGs. The 2nd forum, held on 12 October 2020, discussed the proposal to develop a work plan on SDGs cooperation and to establish a mechanism for cooperation among national development planning agencies. Envisioned to engage various sectoral bodies and stakeholders, the work plan is expected to steer cooperation for the Decade of Action and complement the current development priorities of ASEAN.

The forum's participants highlighted the importance of reliable statistics and data to monitor SDGs' progress and encouraged governments to leverage innovation and technology to improve data systems and availability. The participants also noted that governments must endeavor to boost capacity of and allocate more resources to statistical offices. Concrete example of regional cooperation on statistics is the Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators of the ASEAN Community Statistical System which has recently launched the ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Baseline Report 2020 and the ASEAN Online Database for SDG Indicators. This 2nd forum was held in cooperation with Switzerland and is part of the Road to Bern, a series of events on SDGs leading to the UN World Data Forum 2021.

The annual ASEAN-China-UNDP symposium on SDGs is another important venue for dialogue on inclusive and sustainable development. The 5th symposium with its focus on the roles of youth in advancing SDG implementation, is expected to be held virtually at the end of 2020. The youth play a critical role in helping the region moving forward with the SDGs by bringing in fresh and innovative ideas, promoting technology development and use, and in championing creative communication on the SDGs, to name a few. The 5th symposium is set to be an interactive platform for engagement between policy makers and the youth to discuss policies and initiatives on the catalytic role of youth in development process.

Last but not least, the regular **High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue (HLBD) on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** has served as a review mechanism and platform for candid conversation among ASEAN Member States and partners to monitor the progress of implementation of **Complementarities Roadmap 2020-2025**. The 4th HLBD held in June this year identified further initiatives and new opportunities to follow up the Complementarities Initiative, taking into account the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ways Forward

ASEAN is strongly committed to achieving the SDGs as reflected in its concrete initiatives and continued cooperation. Moving forward, ASEAN Member States must exert robust efforts to translate the recommendations and outcomes arising from existing initiatives into concrete actions. Solidifying coherence and synergy among ASEAN platforms on SDGs cooperation is vital. Through these measures, coupled with the promotion of local actions and empowerment of the people, ASEAN will be able to reap the benefits of our steadfast efforts to make the region an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient community. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

ASEAN Symposium on the ASCC Blueprint 2025, 10 December 2020

We welcome the submission of unpublished papers on ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 for presentation at the upcoming symposium.

Further details available at:
(https://asean.org/storage/2020/11/Info.-Call-for-Papers-for-website.rev2_.pdf)

EASING THE BURDENS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

JOANNE B. AGBISIT
AND *THE ASEAN* EDITORIAL TEAM

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected persons with disabilities (PWDs) in ASEAN? How can their needs, concerns, and recommendations be mainstreamed into post-pandemic recovery efforts?

These were the questions faced by an esteemed line up of speakers in the web forum organised by the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Disability Forum, and the General Election Network for Disability Access on 26 August 2020.

The web forum, titled **Disability Inclusion and COVID-19: Engaging Persons with Disabilities for Effective Response Recovery**, was the first in a series of web forums tackling the issue of disability inclusion in ASEAN. In his opening remarks, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak said that the webinar series aims to contribute to the ongoing implementation of the **ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of PWDs**, the regional bloc's blueprint for promoting and protecting the rights of PWDs.

In this first web forum, speakers from the PWD community detailed how the pandemic and the measures instituted by governments to contain it have exacerbated the vulnerabilities and daily struggles of PWDs.

Information about COVID-19 and key messages about risk and prevention, they said, were not getting across to people with a diverse range of disabilities, such as the hearing- and visually-impaired, or those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially during the first few months of the pandemic. "At the beginning, a lot of announcements and infographics on TV are not accessible because we do not have sign language interpretation and we also do not have audio," said Wong Yoon Loong of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia. This information void has increased PWDS' levels of anxiety and

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distress, and made them more susceptible to fake news coming from unofficial sources.

Wong added that government-mandated lockdowns or stay-at-home orders have made it difficult for PWDs to get the special assistance they need, including buying daily necessities and medicines and preparing meals. "Not all are living with their families and friends…sometimes (even if) you give them provisions like rice, they cannot cook it themselves," he said. "Physical distancing may also discourage the public from offering assistance to PWDs."

It has also become tougher for PWDs, especially those with chronic conditions or who are immuno-compromised, to get the routine medical check-up and treatment that they require due to lack of transportation services, inaccessible support system, and concern for their safety. "I see many women with disabilities refuse to go to the hospital even if they are suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure because they fear getting infected," said Nguyen Hong Ha of Hanoi Independent Living Center, Viet Nam. PWDs also have a hard time accessing COVID-19 tests since only a few hospital facilities offer this service. Wong said that even if these facilities are within reach, many frontliners may not have the proper training to explain the procedures and handle PWDs with care and sensitivity.

It has also become tougher for PWDs, especially those with chronic conditions or who are immuno-compromised, to get the routine medical check-up and treatment that they require due to lack of transportation services, inaccessible support system, and concern for their safety.

Children with special needs who come from poor families or live in remote areas are excluded from online learning since they have no access to smart devices and connectivity, Nguyen also pointed out. This is expected to stunt their development and heighten their sense of isolation. Violence against women and children with disabilities during lockdowns is another growing concern.

The economic fallout from the pandemic has also severely impacted PWDs. Many have lost their income and livelihood, ending their relative independence or leaving them unable to support their families. While ASEAN governments have provided cash and in-kind assistance to the poor and vulnerable groups, these are not sufficient and sustainable. "The assistance provided by government is only for basic expenses, not considering the disability-related costs, such as maintenance medicine, access to transportation, personal assistance, and delivery assistance," said Arnel Manlapaz of the Life Human Center for Independent Living, Philippines.

Forum speakers said that the pandemic handed out important lessons on what measures eased the burdens of PWDs during the pandemic and what more can be done to support them as countries move towards recovery.

Extending social protection schemes to PWDs is one of these measures. "Countries that have ongoing programmes where they offer social protection to PWDs were able to immediately upscale these during the pandemic and ensure that extra assistance went out to PWDs," said Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. He said that covering PWDs with comprehensive social protection scheme is well within reach of Member States and costs only a fraction of their GDP.

Higher and sustainable funding for disability inclusion is also necessary. Bagus Santoso of DEFINIT Asia said that the current value of support for PWDs, at least in the case of Indonesia, is not sufficient and raised the need to infuse more funds into the national budget for programmes that promote empowerment and inclusion of PWDs. Since funds are not limitless, Santoso suggested calibrated support, i.e. full support for PWDs who have severe disabilities and are completely dependent, and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for PWDs who are skilled and have economic potential. He commended Member States, such as Indonesia, that have instituted quotas for employment of PWDs in the public and private sectors—a significant stride towards inclusion.

ASEAN may likewise mobilise funds from partner organisations to support programmes benefiting PWDs. Jillian Ray of the Australian Mission to ASEAN mentioned the continuing partnership between the Australian government and ASEAN on initiatives to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. "Our Disability Rights in ASEAN project continues to advocate the use of the Enabling Masterplan in COVID-19 response and recovery and we continue to explore opportunities to support ASEAN bodies and disability partners in this work," she said.

Involving organisations of persons with disabilities is also an effective way of delivering information and assistance to the PWD community. "These organisations are natural mechanisms to monitor the situation of PWDs. They give feedback to the government; at other times, they take additional action, such as looking for resources to support PWDs," said Manlapaz. Richard Tan, Focal Point of Singapore for the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development, mentioned several PWD organisations that carry out inspiring work within the region, such as the ASEAN Disability Forum which has been engaged in raising awareness, providing training, and harmonising legislation in several Member States.

Since PWDs are not a homogenous group, collecting and systematising data on PWDs are cited as essential for better programme targeting and provision of emergency assistance. "Lack of data is connected to poor targeting, but even if data are available, they are not used for delivery of services," said Manlapaz.

Embedding PWDs' concerns into regional and national post-pandemic recovery and rebuilding plans will also guarantee inclusion. Tan said that ASEAN Member States are miles ahead in this area, with ASEAN Leaders issuing the **Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19** and five ministerial bodies—labor, agriculture and forestry, health, economic, rural development and poverty eradication—setting their respective plans to address the pandemic and its aftermath. "Equally important is the special meeting convened by ASEAN ministers of social welfare and development, the ones in charge of the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025 and looking after the welfare of the vulnerable groups in ASEAN," said Tan. He said that the ministers recognised the differentiated and disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups such as PWDs and pledged to support mainstreaming disability in all COVID-19 measures, such as access to facilities, social protection, and allocation of public funds.

The web forum, streamed through Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook, was attended by some 100 participants from organisations of PWDs, ASEAN's dialogue and development partners, and sectoral bodies of the socio-cultural, economic, and political-security pillars. Sita Sumrit, Head of the Poverty Eradication and Gender Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, mentioned that the next two web forums will focus on applying disability inclusion principles to ASEAN's economic integration agenda and smart-city and connectivity initiatives. ■

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THE RICE THAT BINDS

KIRAN SAGOO, PhD
AND *THE ASEAN* EDITORIAL TEAM

Rice is the primary source of sustenance in Southeast Asia. Eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, this grain of life nourishes both the body and spirit of ASEAN's people.

The region is home to over a thousand varieties of rice grains, which include both glutinous and non-glutinous versions. Rice grains include shades of white, pink, orange, red, brown, and black.

Ample rice-based dishes are available in the region, with many of them prepared in similar ways. Boiled, steamed, fried, or grilled, dishes include the deliberate use of coconut milk, herbs, and spices. A common sight in the region are rice packets wrapped up in banana leaves, containing either a savoury or sweet treat. Rice meals can range from having just one accompanying dish to over ten dishes. The region also has a wide array of dishes made from rice flour. From fluffy pancakes to comforting puddings, rice is central in ASEAN's cuisine.

Borbor

Congee

Bubur (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore); Borbor (Cambodia); Khao Piak Khao (Lao PDR); Hsan Pyoke (Myanmar); Arroz Caldo (Philippines); Jok (Thailand); Chao (Viet Nam)

People in the region often start their day with a hearty bowl of rice porridge. This soft rice dish is boiled with ginger in water or broth, then topped with eggs or shredded meat and garnished with green onion, coriander, lime, and fried shallots. The Philippines version uses glutinous rice. Variations to congee include adding water spinach, corn kernels, or yam, as in *bubur Manado*. A vegetarian version known as *khichdi* is made from rice, lentils, and spices, reflecting Indian origins.

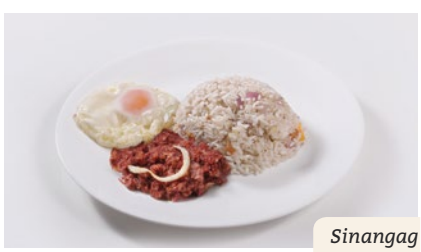
Rice and chicken

Bay Moan (Cambodia); Hainanese Chicken Rice (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand); Khao Niew Ping Gai (Lao PDR); Kyet Kyan Ma Sai (Myanmar); Chicken Inasal (Philippines); Com Ga Hoi An (Viet Nam)

The staple street food dish of rice and chicken takes various forms across the region, with countries having similar dishes or cooking styles. The Hainanese style rice is cooked in chicken broth and served with either poached or roasted chicken, and a ginger-lime chili sauce. It is enjoyed in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. In Viet Nam, turmeric is added to the broth, and it is served with fish sauce, instead of chili sauce. The sauce accompanying Cambodia's *bay moan* is richly flavored with birds' eye chilies and fish sauce. Myanmar's *kyet kyan ma sai* includes chicken boiled with preserved vegetables, to accompany the rice.

In Lao PDR and the Philippines, rice is eaten with grilled chicken. Marinated in vinegar, kalamansi, ginger, and lemongrass, and grilled till golden-brown, this flavourful Filipino dish is served with additional spiced vinegar known as *sinamak*. Cilantro, soya sauce and fish sauce are added to the marinade for *ping gai*, and it is served with glutinous rice.

Com Ga Hoi An



Sinangag

Fried Rice

Nasi Goreng (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia); Bay Cha (Cambodia); Khao Khua (Lao PDR); Hta Min Gyaw (Myanmar); Sinangag (Philippines); Khao Op Wapperot (Thailand); Com Chien (Viet Nam)

A good cook knows that it is always best to use day old rice for fried rice. The ingenuity of combining leftover rice with eggs, meat or seafood, and vegetables makes a highly flavorsome dish. From the addition of sambal or curry paste; pineapples or ginger-flower; soya sauce or fish sauce or both, the region has numerous varieties of this tasteful dish.

Khanom Krok

Pancakes

Penyaram (Brunei Darussalam); Nom Krouk (Cambodia); Appam/Kue Ape (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore); Khanom Krok (Thailand); Bein Mont (Myanmar); Khao Nom Kok (Lao PDR); Salukara (Philippines); Banh Xeo (Viet Nam)

The region has an impressive range of pancake dishes made from rice flour. A common feature is the addition of coconut milk to the batter, which is then cooked either on the griddle or wok. Brunei Darussalam's *penyaram* is fried golden brown for a sweet treat. Cambodia's *nom krouk*, Thailand's *khanom krok* and Lao PDR's *khao nom kok* are small coconut cakes which are topped with green onions, sweet corn kernels or taro cubes. Viet Nam's *banh xeo* is a crispy crepe served folded, incorporating a savoury filling of meat and beansprouts. *Appam* or *kuih ape* in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore has a sweet, fluffy centre with crispy edges. Myanmar's *bein mont* is a flat pancake topped with nuts and seeds for a snack, while *salukara* from the Philippines uses young coconut wine as a riser, and is served sweet as a breakfast dish.

Pudding

Pulut Ketan (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore); Bay Damnaeub (Cambodia); Khao Niew Makmuang (Lao PDR, Thailand); Shwe Hta Min (Myanmar); Champorado (Philippines); Che Dau Trang (Viet Nam)

Pulut Ketan

Pulut Ketan, a pudding made from either white or black rice, is boiled with coconut milk and sweetened with coconut sugar. This warm, comforting treat is enjoyed in five countries in the region. In Myanmar, the pudding is made without coconut milk, and topped with shredded coconut instead. The love of the popular dessert of sweetened sticky rice boiled in coconut milk and served with mango, is shared among Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand. In Viet Nam, black eyed peas are added to the sticky rice mixture. Philippines' *champorado* is made from sticky rice, brown sugar, and chocolate, topped with milk. It is a traditional breakfast fare, usually paired with dried fish.

Tumpeng

Arroz Valenciana

Festive rice dishes

Southeast Asia's colorful landscape continues to be well represented in its food. Colors of the rainbow can be seen in the rice-based dishes of Southeast Asia.

Red rice dishes include Viet Nam's *xôi gấc*, which consists of sticky rice steamed with coconut milk, sugar, and the deep red gac fruit. Believed to bring prosperity, this dish is usually served on weddings and the lunar new year.

Nasi Kerabu

Orange can be seen in Philippines' *arroz valenciana*. The dish is typically made with rice, coconut milk, boiled eggs, seafood, and chorizo, with the addition of saffron, paprika, and tomato contributing to its happy orange hue. This popular festive dish adorns the table during fiesta and Christmas.

There is no shortage of yellow rice-based dishes among countries in the region. Myanmar's *nga htamin*, is a spicy snack of rice cooked with turmeric and served with fish and garlic oil. Indonesia's *nasi kuning*, which literally means yellow rice, is a common feature at many celebrations. The rice is shaped into a cone and placed in the center of the platter, surrounded by fried chicken, tofu, tempeh, shredded omelette, pickles, vegetables, and beef. The whole platter is known as *tumpeng*.

The grassy green fields of Pampanga, Philippines is home to *duman*, a naturally green coloured rice which gets its hue from rice kernel which remain on the husk. The kernels are soaked in water, cooked and then pounded. Available after the harvest festival in October–November, *duman* rice can be eaten on its own, added to ice-cream or milk, or turned into rice cakes.

Malaysia's *nasi kerabu* adds a welcomed blue to the table. Rice is cooked with butterfly-pea flowers, a natural blue dye. The dish is served with herbs mixed with toasted coconut, salted egg, marinated chicken, fish crackers and sambal.

Purple rice dishes, include Indonesia's *wajid*, a sweet sticky rice cake, which is made from black rice. Traditionally cultivated only for the royal family during the Majapahit era, this heirloom grain is now being produced for wider consumption. *Wajid* is also made in Brunei Darussalam ■

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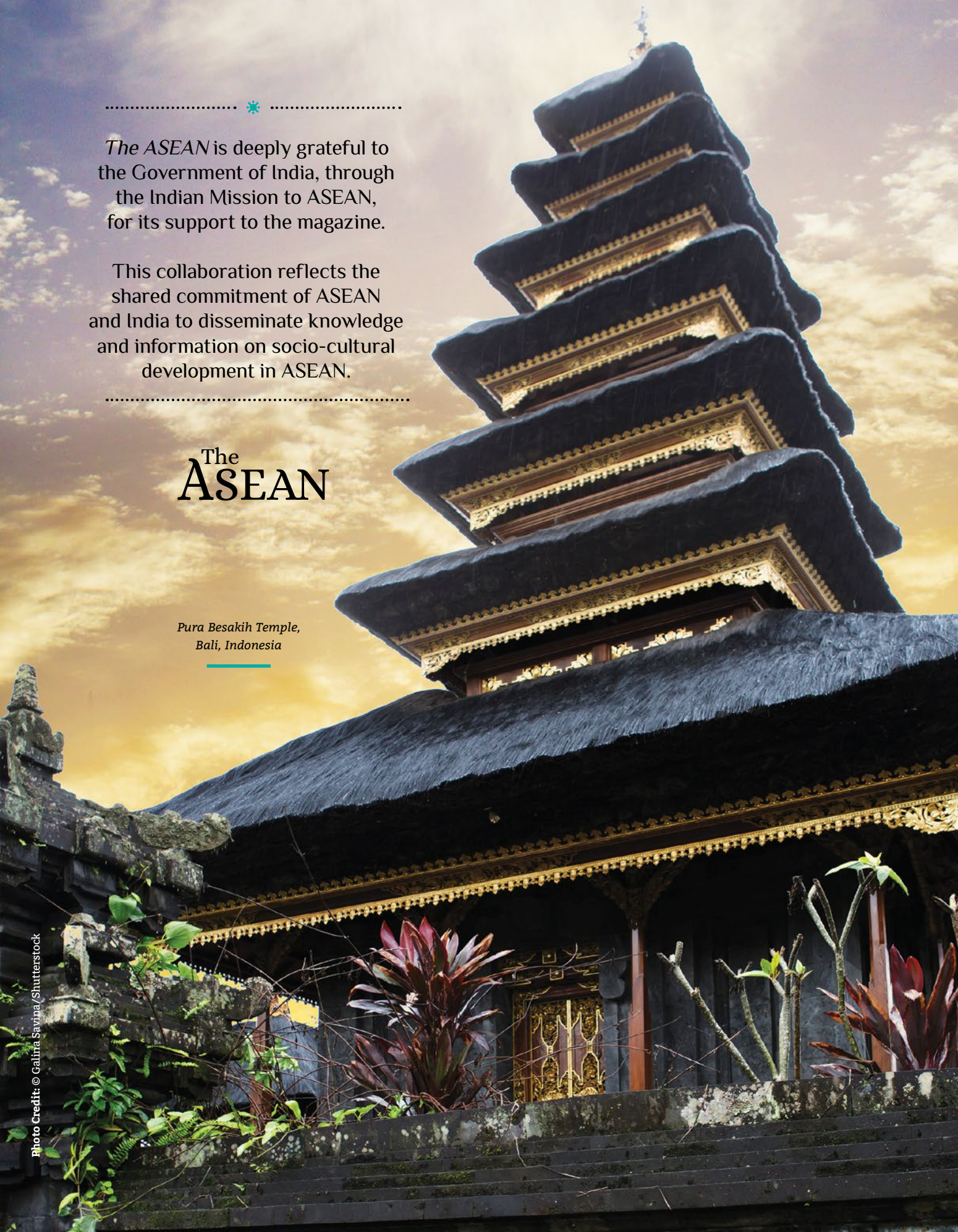
The ASEAN



Pura Besakih Temple, Bali, Indonesia

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