



WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Event Report
19 August 2015

The Humanitarian Assistance and
Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme

Event Report

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Report of a public panel discussion and exhibition organised by
The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme,
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS),
Nanyang Technological University (NTU),
Singapore

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19 August 2015
The POD, National Library
Singapore

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ORDER OF EVENTS

Programme

- 18:00–18:30 Arrival of Guests and Registration
- 18:30–18:40 Welcome remarks by
Dr Kumar Ramakrishna, Associate Professor, Head of Policy Studies, RSIS, NTU
- 18:40:19:25 Panel Discussion
- Speakers:
Colonel Lim Kwang Tang, Director of the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC)
- Mr Johann Annuar, Founder and Trainer of Humanity Assist*
- Mr Hassan Ahmad, Technical Adviser of the Corporate Citizen Foundation (CCF)*
- Moderator:
Dr Alistair D. B. Cook, Coordinator for HADR Programme and Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU
- 19:25–20:00 Q&A Session
- 20:00–21:00 Poster Exhibition & Networking Session

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, marked the World Humanitarian Day by organising a public outreach event with the theme “Voices from The Field” at the POD in the National Library, Singapore. This inaugural event of the HADR Programme included a panel discussion, poster exhibition, and a networking session.

Many different types of responders assist in complex humanitarian situations, making the documentation of events on the ground particularly difficult. In effect, standard operating procedures, difficulties and strengths in coordination of response goes unrecorded and if they are recorded, political sensitivities oftentimes make it difficult for the story to be fully told. With this in mind, it is imperative that responders share their experiences with one another, identify lessons learned, and collaborate so as to better humanitarian response in the future. As such, the RSIS’ HADR programme provided a platform in which realised experiences from the field can be shared with different stakeholders and the public.

In the first presentation, Colonel Lim Kwang Tang, Director of Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC), described how the military works on-the-ground in humanitarian settings. In his most recent deployment to Nepal, COL Lim recounted that Singaporean forces treated the most number of casualties during its 14-day mission. He explained that the military was not originally designed to respond to disasters, but in the Asia Pacific, the military is most likely the first responder in the last resort. In other words, the military has the surge capacity to respond quickly even though humanitarian assistance is primarily a civilian response. With this in mind, the

military is likely to be present and a main player in humanitarian response in the Asia Pacific.

Mr Johann Annuar, Founder and Trainer of Humanity Assist and Engineer with *Medicins Sans Frontieres*, recalled his experiences in Kenya during his mission in an internally displaced people’s camp. He spoke about the people’s resilience in the camp and the ability of refugees to help one another despite the adversities they face.

Mr Hassan Ahmad, Technical Adviser to the Corporate Citizen Foundation, seamlessly wove the former presentations together. He explained that since humanitarian situations are complex and attract a differentiated set of stakeholders, cooperation and partnerships prior to and on-the-ground are important. Therefore there is no single entity that has all and infinite resources for complex humanitarian situations. As such, it is imperative that resources are pooled and utilised in a manner that is effective and that resources meet the needs of the affected victims.

Through this event, members of the public were able to engage with the speakers during the panel discussion portion, and also find out more about humanitarian advocacies through different exhibitors from Badan Agama dan Pejalaran Radin Mas (BAPA), Corporate Citizen Foundation, Mercy Relief, Relief.sg, the RSIS’ HADR Programme, Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Singapore Red Cross, and World Vision. This event was able to pique the public’s interest in the workings of an HADR deployment. A lively debate on the relevance of international protocols and what happens after response efforts leave was fostered. The importance of knowing the terrain, people, and culture of a mission location was also highlighted. The most important observation from this public event was that HADR efforts need to be context-specific and sensitive.



COL Lim (second from right) sharing his insights at the question-and-answer session. With him are the other two speakers, Mr Hassan Ahmad (left) and Mr Johann Annuar (second from left), and moderator Dr Alistair D.B. Cook, the HADR Programme Coordinator and Research Fellow from RSIS.



Public engaging with exhibitors during the networking session.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, World Humanitarian Day is marked annually on 19 August, to commemorate humanitarian personnel who had served in adverse situations to help people most in need. The 19th of August was chosen as World Humanitarian Day by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to remember the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2003. This incident killed the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and 21 of his co-workers. To this end, World Humanitarian Day recognises the fallen while celebrating the undying spirit of humanitarianism worldwide.

In line with celebrating humanitarianism in its different forms, “Voices from the Field” brought three speakers together to share their insights, difficulties, and experiences in helping others in complex emergency situations from their different perspectives. The three main findings were:

- (i) The traditional military considers disasters as uncommon situations, yet today, the military is the most common responder.

Military protocols and the military itself are not designed to address non-traditional security issues. Given this, disasters are uncommon for the military. However, they are currently the likely first responders in the Asia Pacific context.

- (ii) There is a need to have an accurate needs assessment in the field to generate an appropriate response effort.

With relief often coming from outside the affected area, an accurate needs assessment is vital for efficiency, accuracy, and suitability of response efforts.

- (iii) It is important to work together with others in the field.

More often than not, responders to a disaster come from different backgrounds and sectors that have different skill-sets and knowledge. Working with others and more specifically with people on-the-ground and from the area allows for information sharing, and better, more comprehensive planning and response efforts.

In an effort to illustrate the challenges faced in HADR, speakers from three different stakeholders were invited to reflect on their experiences. “Voices from the Field” provided a platform for this, while allowing for the identification of shortcomings and difficulties on the ground. In particular, it is through the identification of such challenges, that humanitarian efforts can be improved, and developed to better meet the needs of those they respond to.



COL Lim talking about his HADR experience, challenges and lessons learned from the Nepal earthquake relief operation.



Mr Johann sharing his experiences in Kenya during his mission in an internally displaced people's camp.

DISASTERS ARE UNCOMMON SITUATIONS, BUT THEY ARE THE 'NEW NORMAL'

By design, militaries were not formed to respond to disasters, but rather, they were made to fight wars. Nevertheless, in the Asia Pacific, national militaries are primarily the first responders in disaster situations and other complex humanitarian situations alike.

Bearing this in mind, the consequences induced by climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather conditions such as typhoons have the ability to create and exacerbate pre-existing non-traditional security issues. Moreover, it is not that complex non-traditional security events have increased by number or by frequency, but rather by the gravity of the experienced event. Simply put, there are more chances of large-scale non-traditional disasters today than ever before. Therefore, disasters are the 'new normal'. Given this, military deployment during such events will likely continue, thus it is imperative for the military to prepare for such events now. Doing things *ad hoc*, and on-the-ground, serve as learning experiences,

but these are not suitable if the military wants to provide the most holistic and comprehensive response possible. It is suggested that the military and other humanitarian assistance entities, conceptualise disasters through the disaster risk management cycle, and identify the areas in which they excel. On the military side, personnel should excel in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. For preparedness, militaries can aid local government units in creating a pre-disaster risk assessment. For response, the military has the capabilities for search and rescue. Finally, military doctors and engineers can aid in the immediate recovery through patient care, water provision, and temporary housing.

The capabilities of the military are arguably more developed than any other humanitarian assistance response entity, and even if disasters are 'uncommon' for the military, they are likely to be first responders in the era where disasters are the norm.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ACCURATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The post-disaster situation is demanding and complex, where the most important task is to assess in good time the humanitarian needs and give life-saving relief to the affected population. It further obliges an assessment of the losses and damages caused by the disaster. Major disaster incidents are often followed by multiple assessments, conducted by many groups covering a wide range of areas. These assessments range from the rapid assessment of immediate needs to the assessment of risk reduction requirements and long-term recovery. An accurate needs assessment is vital in post-disaster settings. It can help monitor the implementation of the disaster response, and also support the government's appeal for international assistance.

In order for decision-makers to plan an effective response, it is essential to get accurate information such as; the demographics of the affected population and the number of people affected, the details of the emergency situation and condition of the affected

population, and the local response capacities and available resources, including organisational and logistical capabilities. In many cases, local communities and residents are the first responders helping one another. Consequently, listening to the residents' needs and concerns is key to planning an efficient response strategy. The major challenges for humanitarian agencies are coordination, accessibility and matching aid to needs. Occasionally, relief supplies may not be what is actually required on the ground. Even basic requirements such as food, water and medical supplies sometimes do not match the actual needs of people.

In addition, there is likely to be duplication of aid in some areas, while other areas in need are not accessible. Hence, an accurate needs assessment is essential to obtain the precise information of the affected areas and conditions on the ground to ensure that humanitarian agencies can carry out an effective disaster response.

PARTNERSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT

When it comes to disaster, it is important to work with different actors who have different resources and capacities for disaster response. As such, partnerships are very important as no stakeholder holds all the resources. Tri-sector participation, in which the public, people, and private sectors work together in disaster response, allows for extensive information sharing and comprehensive planning. The public sector comprises Government agencies, the UN, ASEAN; the people sector includes INGOs, NGOs, local communities; and the private sector consists of business corporations. Tri-sector engagement and collaborations in post-disaster settings are crucial to bridge the gap between relief and recovery efforts.

Firstly, it is important to engage with the people sector—local communities and NGOs—and identify their capacity in response and needs assessment. These communities have strong networks, relationships, and effective leaders who have the ability to make decisions in emergency circumstances. Meaningful engagement with the local community in the assessments will considerably improve the timeliness and quality of outcomes. Hence, international aid agencies should work together with national and local organisations, and networks.

Secondly, it is important to work with the public sector—the national government and government aid agencies—when it comes to disaster. The national government has resources and capabilities that some aid agencies do not have. For instance, they have the logistical capability and helicopters to transport the tonnage of supplies required to isolated lands with no road access. In addition, the national government knows best where and how to allocate the relief distributions in emergency circumstances.

Thirdly, building partnerships with the private sector is an important segment of improving disaster response, recovery and preparedness in many perspectives. There is also recognition among practitioners that people-public-private partnerships are an important part of strengthening resilience as they can help to improve effectiveness and efficiency in disaster management. In many cases, tri-sector partnerships built between public, private and people sectors can facilitate the operations of disaster management agencies. A government organisation can attain its goals more effectively through such tri-sector partnerships than by relying merely on its own capabilities and resources to attain its goals. This highlights the importance of building strong partnerships to facilitate disaster response in post-disaster settings.



Mr Hassan talking about the need for tri-sector participation in HADR efforts.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Colonel Lim Kwang Tang

*Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre, RHCC;
Deputy Chief Guards Officer*

COL Lim Kwang Tang, who is Director of Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Coordination Centre, joined the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in March 1985 and was commissioned from Officer Cadet School the following year. COL Lim graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1990 with a Bachelor in Business Administration. COL Lim is presently the Deputy Chief Guards Officer (DY CGO) at Headquarters, Singapore Guards. He previously held several command appointments in the Guards and Infantry, and was Commander of Army Training & Evaluation Centre. COL Lim also oversees the capability development of the Guards Formation, as part of the 3rd Generation Army transformation. As part of SAF's reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan under the ambit of Operation BLUE RIDGE, COL Lim led the deployed forces as National Contingent Commander. He was awarded the SAF Overseas Service Medal (Enhanced) and the NATO (ISAF) Medal. In recognition of his professionalism and dedication, COL Lim was awarded the SAF 20-years Long Service Award and the Command Appointment Award.

Mr Hassan Ahmad

Corporate Citizen Foundation

Mr Hassan Ahmad is the Technical Adviser of the Corporate Citizen Foundation (CCF), a private sector alliance for regional humanitarian disaster relief and development, launched in October 2014. Hassan conceptualised and crystalised the CCF in his capacity as the Director of Philanthropy & Sustainability of HSL Constructor, a local foreshore marine civil engineering firm. Earlier, he was the first Executive Director of Mercy Relief (2003–2006) with

extensive field experience in the area of humanitarian assistance. In 2006, he helped the Lien Foundation set up its regional humanitarian arm, Lien Aid, and became its first Chief Executive, focusing on water and sanitation issues in Asia. He returned to Mercy Relief in March 2008 and was appointed as Chief Executive. From 2008–2012, he headed various other studies by Mercy Relief to produce original analyses as editorial contributions to United Nations-endorsed publications by UN IDRC, WHO, UNESCO, UNISDR and UNDESA. Locally, he serves as the District Councillor for the Southeast Community Development Centre (SECDC) and as a volunteer to the Inter-Religious Organisation Singapore (IRO).

Mr Johann Annuar

Humanity Assist

Mr Johann Annuar is the Founder and Trainer of Humanity Assist. Johann joined Raleigh Society after the 2004 Tsunami, to contribute to post-Tsunami reconstruction, becoming the Raleigh Project Facilitator & Coordinator for projects on Nias Island. He joined *Medecins Sans Frontieres* [Doctors without Borders] (MSF) in 2007, setting up a refugee camp in Kenya. A month later, he was assigned to China for the emergency earthquake in Szechuan. He is currently MSF Hong Kong's peer representative for Singapore, is trained as an MSF trainer and also sits on its Board. Recently, he completed a Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance by the Fordham University, New York in 2011. Currently Johann is Manager and Board Member at Kampung Temasek, a non-profit organisation promoting environmental, ecological & economic sustainability. In the past, Johann was the Communications Officer for the first Singaporean Mount Everest Expedition in 1998. He has also founded and ran a videography company, an IT company, and started a social enterprise consultancy. Activity-wise, Johann is an avid cyclist and in 2003, he cycled from Turkey to New Zealand over 18 months.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITORS

BAPA

BAPA is a non-profit social organisation formed in 1957 and was registered as a society on the 6 August 1960. Its objective was to uplift the education and economic status of the residence of Radin Mas district by providing access to affordable education, both religious and academic. There have been more than 20,000 beneficiaries of its services since then.

For more information, please visit www.bapa.org.sg.

Corporate Citizen Foundation

The Corporate Citizen Foundation seeks to catalyse corporate collaboration to exercise collective corporate citizenry towards a better, safer and friendlier Asia. It focuses on sustainable community development to increase capacity and resilience of vulnerable communities through livelihood enhancement, risk reduction and disaster preparedness programmes.

For more information, please visit corporatecitizen.org.

Mercy Relief

Mercy Relief is Singapore's only homegrown independent non-governmental humanitarian charity, established to respond to human tragedies in Asia. Its aid programmes include providing timely and effective assistance to disaster-stricken communities; and longer-term development projects to uplift the lives of the impoverished and disadvantaged, focusing on water and sanitation, shelter, sustainable livelihoods, healthcare and education. Mercy Relief serves the less fortunate and needy regardless of country, culture or creed.

For more information, please visit mercyrelief.org.

Relief.sg

Relief.sg (RSG for short) is a humanitarian social enterprise. We are a non-governmental organisation

that is in the business of organising relief missions to help those affected by conflict, calamities and climate change. Faith-driven, RSG helps displaced persons regardless of race, religion, or political convictions, with a focus on those whose humanitarian needs are underserved and neglected.

For more information, please visit relief.sg.

Singapore Civil Defence Force

The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) is a uniformed organisation under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The main role of SCDF is to provide fire-fighting, rescue and emergency medical services; mitigating hazardous materials incidents, as well as formulate, implement and enforce regulations on fire safety and civil defence shelter matters.

For more information, please visit www.scdf.gov.sg

Singapore Red Cross

The Singapore Red Cross (SRC), founded on 30 September 1949, is an independent humanitarian organisation that is non-political, non-religious and is part of the International Federation of the Red Cross. SRC adheres to the Geneva Convention (1949) and bases its work on the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, neutrality, unity, universality and voluntary service.

For more information, please visit www.redcross.org.sg

World Vision

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. Working in nearly 100 countries around the world, World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

For more information, please visit www.worldvision.org.sg

ABOUT THE HADR PROGRAMME

RSIS recently established the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme to facilitate and enhance policy-relevant and academically rigorous research on preparedness and response strategies to the fragile and unpredictable humanitarian scenarios we face in the Asia Pacific. The HADR programme team comprehensively investigates cooperation and effectiveness in the emerging humanitarian landscape, regional emergency response frameworks, disaster preparedness, humanitarian technology, and the identification and development of response niches for civilian and military actors. The programme also seeks to develop the next generation of global leaders in HADR through capacity-building and training workshops. It draws on the knowledge and expertise of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies and the Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS).

Core research areas

- Future HADR landscape in Asia. This first pillar of the programme tracks the emergence of new humanitarian actors (both state and non-state) and maps particular successes, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in preparing for disaster relief and conflict response in the region. This research area also focuses on the relationships between civilian and military actors and the emerging points of difference and convergence between the two in responding to HADR in the Asia-Pacific.
- Community protection and assistance. The second pillar focuses on the complex security environment brought about by vulnerable communities' varying capacity to protect themselves and the increasing number of responders providing assistance. This research area maps the most vulnerable populations so as to better characterise needs assessments and determine where assistance should be deployed and locally implemented.
- Humanitarian effectiveness. The third pillar of the HADR programme addresses the challenge of better emergency disaster response in complex situations. There is a significant challenge in effectively and efficiently responding to natural disasters and conflict; this research area evaluates the quality and impact of both military and civilian organisation emergency responses.
- Humanitarian technology. The fourth pillar of the HADR programme examines the field of humanitarian technology as applied to a broadly defined context of crises encompassing both natural disasters and conflict zones. This research area identifies the impact technology has on humanitarian responses as well as the emergent challenges of information technology, big data and technological innovations in humanitarian action.

More information on HADR Programme is available at www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre/research-programmes/humanitarian-assistance.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY (NTS) STUDIES

The **Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)** conducts research and produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness, and building the capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in Asia. The centre addresses knowledge gaps, facilitates discussions and analyses, engages policymakers and contributes to building institutional capacity in the following areas: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief; Food, Health and Energy Security; Climate Change, Resilience and Sustainable Development; and Peace and Human Security. NTS Centre brings together myriad NTS stakeholders in regular workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as provides a networking platform for NTS research institutions in the Asia Pacific through the NTS-Asia Consortium.

More information on NTS Centre and a complete list of available publications, policy briefs and reports can be found here: www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES (IDSS)

The **Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)** is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on defence and security research to serve national needs. IDSS faculty and research staff conducts both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. IDSS is divided into three research clusters: (i) The Asia Pacific cluster—comprising the China, South Asia, United States, and Regional Security Architecture programmes; (ii) The Malay Archipelago cluster—comprising the Indonesia and Malaysia programmes; and (iii) The Military and Security cluster—comprising the Military Transformations, Maritime Security, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) programmes. Finally, the Military Studies Programme, the wing that provides military education, is also a part of IDSS.

For more information about IDSS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg/research/idss.

ABOUT THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** is a professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate education and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Region Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

For more information about RSIS, please visit www.rsis.edu.sg.



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