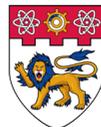


WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Event Report
17 August 2017

RSiS
Nanyang Technological University

S. RAJARATNAM
SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE

Event Report

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

**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**

**17 August 2017
Oriental Ballroom, Mandarin Oriental
Singapore**

Rapporteur:

Mr Christopher Chen Zhi Ming

This report summarises the proceedings of the Public Panel Discussion as interpreted by the rapporteur and editor. This report does not necessarily reflect the views of RSIS.

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PROGRAMME

18:00	Exhibition opens
18:00-19:00	Arrival of Guests and Registration
19:00-19:05	Welcome remarks by Associate Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony Head, Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), RSIS
19:05-19:40	Panel Discussion <i>Speakers:</i> (1) Mr Benjamin Jeyaraj William, Secretary General/CEO of the Singapore Red Cross (2) Dr Marlene Lee, Member of the Board of Directors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Hong Kong Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, National University of Singapore (3) Professor Lionel Lee, Former Chief of the Singapore Armed Forces Medical Corps Executive Vice-Dean, Administration, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, NTU, Singapore <i>Moderator:</i> Dr Alistair D. B. Cook Coordinator for HADR Programme and Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU
19:40-20:00	Q&A Session
20:00-20:05	Closing remarks by Ambassador Ong Keng Yong Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS
20:05-21:00	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, commemorated World Humanitarian Day by organising a public event, 'Voices from The Field' at the Mandarin Oriental Singapore on the evening of 17th August 2017. This annual event included a panel discussion, poster exhibition, and a networking session. The three panellists were Mr Benjamin Jeyaraj William, Secretary General/CEO of the Singapore Red Cross, Dr Marlene Lee, member of the Board of Directors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Hong Kong, and Professor Lionel Lee, former Chief of the Singapore Armed Forces Medical Corps.

World Humanitarian Day takes place every year on 19th August to recognise aid workers who risk their lives every day in adverse situations to help people most in need. It is important to recognise the challenges faced by humanitarian workers around the world and share their experiences so as to improve humanitarian responses in the future. The RSIS World Humanitarian Day event aims to raise public awareness of the humanitarian crises we face and the work undertaken by humanitarian actors to address them. By bringing together aid responders from different sectors, it provides a platform for the sharing of experiences from the field, and facilitates the exchange of ideas and insights.

In the first presentation, Mr Benjamin Jeyaraj William highlighted the need for humanitarian organisations to collaborate when responding to complex emergencies. In order to prevent duplication of resources, humanitarian organisations should collectively coordinate relief efforts amongst themselves. As individual entities, they should focus on the areas of relief in which they have expertise. Drawing on his experience as Secretary General of the Singapore Red Cross, he advocated for the building up of networks and coalitions between international stakeholders and local actors. The scale, frequency and complexity of crises in the world are constantly increasing. As such, the need for meaningful collaboration and cooperation has never been greater.

The second presentation featured Dr Marlene Lee's sharing her experience working as a field psychologist during the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, which provided insight into some of the challenges that humanitarian workers face while working in the field. She highlighted that there is a need for humanitarian organisations to build up local capacity through the training of local relief workers. This empowers communities and enables the

continuation of the recovery process even after foreign humanitarian workers have left. A community-centred response should be the focus of international humanitarian operations.

The third panellist Professor Lionel Lee, who is the former Chief of the SAF Medical Corps, emphasised the importance of operational preparedness in humanitarian missions. He identified some key elements that are essential to the success of humanitarian missions, which included pre-mission planning, quick response and notice to move timings, complete and robust mission capabilities, and comprehensive debriefing protocols. He highlighted the need for a well-organised administrative and logistics system, as well as a team that is well-trained and always ready to be deployed. Protocols and training methods need to be constantly improved and optimised after every mission. This can only occur if After Action Reviews are routinely carried out. The most important insights were that the success of humanitarian missions depends on the operational readiness of responders. The time sensitive nature of humanitarian operations necessitates the practice of efficient and decisive deployment capabilities. There also needs to be a focus on sustainable, community-centred responses during disasters and crises; and the need to build coalitions to foster better coordination in humanitarian activities.



(From left) Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Mr Lionel Lee, Associate Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony, Dr Marlene Lee, Mr Benjamin Jeyaraj William and Dr Alistair D.B. Cook

The RSIS World Humanitarian Day event provided an opportunity for members of the public to engage with the speakers during the panel discussion, and to find out more about humanitarian agencies through the various exhibitors including Badan Agama Dan Pelajaran Radin Mas (BAPA), the Earth Observatory of Singapore, Mercy Relief, Save the Children, World Vision, and the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme (RSIS). Overall, the World Humanitarian Day public panel and exhibition brought together a diverse range of humanitarian actors and the wider public to engage on the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time.

WELCOME REMARKS



Associate Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony welcoming participants to the event

Welcome remarks were made by Associate Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), RSIS, NTU, Singapore.

Professor Caballero-Anthony outlined the significance of World Humanitarian Day, in particular how it commemorates and recognises the sacrifices made by humanitarian workers everyday in their pursuit of alleviating the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations. She stated the importance of focusing on the situations of those in need, while also underscoring the challenges faced by humanitarians in the pursuit of this goal. She pointed out that the complexity of emergencies would indubitably bring about compromises in responses; however, these compromises need to be shared and explained to ensure that they do not unduly undermine effectiveness, or stray into the unethical. Finally, she stated that advances in technology offered new possibilities for humanitarians in terms of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their work. As such, there is a need to embrace them. However, she also raised the point that the use of such technologies needs to be carefully moderated, as they do bring forth their own host of issues.

INTRODUCTION



Ambassador Ong Keng Yong highlights the three main takeaways from the panel discussion

Since 2009, World Humanitarian Day (WHD) has taken place every year to recognise aid workers who risk their lives in adverse situations to help people most in need. It commemorates the bombing of the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, on 19th August 2003 which claimed 22 lives. World Humanitarian Day provides an opportunity to recognise the efforts of humanitarian workers all around the globe who work tirelessly every single day. It also pays tribute to those who have fallen while helping people in need.

In celebration of World Humanitarian Day, the RSIS event “Voices from the Field” brought three speakers together to share their insights, difficulties, and experiences in helping others in complex emergencies from their different perspectives. The three main takeaways from the panel discussion were:

(i) The importance of operational preparedness in humanitarian operations.

The time sensitive nature of humanitarian operations necessitates the maintenance of an organised administrative and logistics system. This facilitates faster and more efficient deployment capabilities.

(ii) Focus on sustainable, community-centred responses.

The first responsibility of humanitarian actors is to ensure that the welfare of vulnerable communities is catered for. As such, it is important for humanitarian workers to be aware of the situation on the ground and respond appropriately to the needs of the community.

(iii) There is a need to build coalitions to facilitate coordination in humanitarian activities.

The large scale and complexity of disasters render it almost impossible for humanitarian workers to work in isolation when providing relief. There is a pressing need to foster better collaboration between all humanitarian actors.

The event provided a platform for the sharing of observations and ideas by stakeholders involved in HADR. The personal accounts of the three speakers also provided unique insights from both the civil and military sectors. It is through this identification of challenges and exchange of ideas and experiences, that humanitarian efforts can be improved to better meet the needs of affected populations.

IMPORTANCE OF OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS IN HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS



Mr Lionel Lee speaking about the importance for humanitarian actors to be operationally prepared

Since the 1990s, the military has been increasingly involved in international disaster relief efforts. Although the military possesses capabilities intrinsically useful in HADR operations, it is still considered a relatively new actor by traditional humanitarian actors. The time sensitive nature of humanitarian operations necessitates quick responses; any delay can lead to an exponential surge in the number of damages and casualties in the affected areas. The military's capacity to maintain an organised administrative and logistics system thus makes it a very valuable asset in disaster response situations. Being operationally ready is essential for the successful implementation of humanitarian operations.

Deployment capabilities should constantly be optimised. This is a multi-faceted process. Essential equipment and relief supplies should be packed and ready to be deployed at any time. This ensures that the military can meet the surge capacity requirements for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. Being operationally prepared also means that personnel should be trained to adapt to situations on the ground. Team leaders and Commanding Officers need to be trained in communication and PR skills, which promote smoother interaction with local and international actors when they are on the ground. The training and formation of operationally-ready teams should be a key focus of pre-disaster preparation efforts. For example, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Medical Corp has multiple teams on standby, ready to be deployed for missions at any

point of time. This ensures that disaster responses are swift and efficient. Deployment capabilities should be improved after every humanitarian mission.

Addressing mistakes and learning from past failures can also help to improve operational preparedness. The conducting of After Action Reviews is crucial in the aftermath of humanitarian responses. These debriefing sessions provide key stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss and share lessons learnt from the humanitarian operation. It also allows the identification and management of any psychological trauma that relief personnel might be experiencing. Working in a disaster setting can be a very harrowing experience. The onus is on organisations to constantly monitor and ensure the mental well-being of their personnel. These efforts contribute to the overall operational preparedness of the organisation, and ensure that it is ready to respond to future disasters.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE, COMMUNITY-CENTRED RESPONSES

When disaster strikes, the most important task of humanitarian organisations is to provide immediate relief to the affected population. However, the scale and complexity of such situations can sometimes result in a mismatch between the aid provided and the actual needs of the people. It is important for humanitarian workers to be aware of the situation on the ground and respond appropriately to the needs of the community. The first responsibility of humanitarian actors is to cater for the welfare and security of affected communities. This also means ensuring that their needs are met as the true test of humanitarian effectiveness.

The Asia-Pacific region is characterized by a high degree of cultural diversity. Sensitivity of this diversity is required when planning for aid responses. For example, a traditional fishing community would be averse to living in houses built away from the coast, even if conventional wisdom dictates that this arrangement keeps them safe from tsunamis. Organisations should not simply transplant relief initiatives that worked in other disasters and countries to the current disaster-stricken community. A failure to consider the needs and cultural preferences of the local community can lead to the inefficient allocation of resources, which jeopardises the effective provision of aid to people in need. NGOs should work closely with community figures and members of local NGOs. These figures can provide a more accurate appraisal regarding the needs of the populace. It is therefore important to engage with these local actors to formulate an efficient, community-centred response strategy.



Dr Marlene Lee sharing her experiences in the field



Mr Benjamin William speaking about need for meaningful collaboration and cooperation amongst humanitarian actors

It is also imperative to ensure that post-disaster recovery is sustainable. Local actors need to be equipped with the skills to utilise the resources available to them. An issue raised was that there is little use for NGOs to build facilities such as hospitals if the locals are not trained to utilise them. While saving lives is an important short-term goal, there needs to be more long-term planning involved. NGOs should provide training to local healthcare workers and relief providers. Tailoring responses to the capabilities that are already in place can also help to ensure a more sustainable recovery process. The transfer of technical expertise and knowledge helps to build up and enhance local capacity. This ensures that the recovery process can continue even after relief workers leave, and goes a long way to help the population transition more smoothly back to normality after the disaster. Recovery efforts should also include considerations on future disaster preparedness. This helps to build resilience within the community, so that it is better-placed to handle future disasters.

NEED TO BUILD COALITIONS TO FACILITATE COORDINATION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

The large scale and complexity of disasters dictate that humanitarian workers cannot work in isolation when providing relief. Since it is virtually impossible for one singular entity to possess infinite resources and capacity, there is a pressing need to foster better collaboration between all humanitarian actors both prior and during crises. Only when different actors and stakeholders make a concerted effort to work together to leverage on their different capacities and resources, can there be better, more effective humanitarian responses.

One issue that was raised was the tremendous lack of capacity in any individual organisation to respond to disasters. The need to build coalitions and collaborate has never been greater. Humanitarian organisations should recognise the need to collaborate and focus on areas where they have the most expertise. The UN Cluster System is a step in the right direction; clusters foster partnerships between international humanitarian actors, national and local stakeholders, and civil society. However, the system's sector-oriented, predominantly top-down, approach, means that local actors are often not included in discussions. More needs to be done to foster a culture of cooperation and collaboration.

The fact remains that humanitarian actors often have different mandates, guiding principles and institutional values. Militaries and humanitarian organisations traditionally have vastly different objectives; a similar disconnect can be seen between the non-profit and the private sectors. This can prevent meaningful cooperation amongst themselves. While some differences are often substantive to the point that they prevent meaningful cooperation, humanitarian actors need to at least attempt to look past these differences, and try to work in tandem with one another. Operating unilaterally and in isolation creates a silo culture that breeds inefficiency. The lack of coordination and sharing of information more often than not leads to a duplication of relief efforts and an inefficient allocation of resources.

Humanitarian actors should also look towards increasing collaboration with the private sector. A point raised was that, at present, the private sector and the humanitarian sector mostly share a donor-client relationship. The humanitarian sector should look towards engaging the private sector for their expertise and not just for their checkbooks. Private companies can contribute technical expertise and strategic management insights to extend and cultivate the reach and capacity of traditional humanitarian actors. For example, Deutsche Post DHL volunteers its employees to help UN agencies

facilitate airport and warehouse logistics during disasters. The humanitarian and private sector should overcome their mutual mistrust of one another, and work together for mutual benefit. Strategic partnerships formed between both sectors can then be translated into more effective humanitarian action.



Dr Alistair D.B. Cook inviting members of the audience to ask questions



A participant engaging with the speakers



Public interacting with the exhibitors during the networking session



ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Mr Benjamin Jeyaraj William

Former Singapore's Ambassador to the Lao People's Democratic Republic
Secretary General/CEO of the Singapore Red Cross

Mr. Benjamin Jeyaraj William has been the Secretary General/CEO of the Singapore Red Cross from 1 March 2012. Mr. William joined the Foreign Service in 1981

and held various positions which include the Regional and Economics Department; Country Officer for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific; First Secretary in the Singapore High Commission in Bandar Seri Begawan and Singapore Embassy in Manila; Deputy Director in the Management and Personnel Directorate; Deputy Director General in the ASEAN Directorate; Deputy Chief of Mission in the Singapore Embassy in Washington; Deputy Director at the Policy, Planning and Analysis Directorate II covering North America and Europe; Director-General for ASEAN Singapore; and Director of Consular Directorate. From 2007 to 2011, he served as Singapore's Ambassador to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.



Dr Marlene Lee

Member of the Board of Directors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Hong Kong
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology,
National University of Singapore

Dr Marlene Lee is a member of the Board of Directors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Hong Kong. Originally from Malaysia, she has been residing in Singapore for the past twelve years. She is trained as a clinical psychologist and currently sees clients in her psychotherapy private practice. From 2007-2009, Dr Lee was a full-time volunteer field worker with MSF. As a field psychologist, she developed and implemented community-based mental health programs, trained and supervised local counsellors, and provided psychosocial support to victims of armed conflict in Kashmir, India, and Yambio, South Sudan. In addition, she was part of the emergency intervention team for the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China, 2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, and the 2009 Padang earthquake in Indonesia.



Professor Lionel Lee

Former Chief of the Singapore Armed Forces Medical Corps

Executive Vice-Dean, Administration, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, NTU, Singapore

Professor Lionel Lee, PPA, MBBS, MSS, MPH, FAMS, graduated in Medicine from the University of Singapore in 1975. He joined the Singapore Armed Forces Medical Corps in 1976 and rose to the rank of Brigadier General and the Chief of the Medical Corps. He retired from the Singapore Armed Forces in 2001. He was an Adjunct Professor with the Duke University-National University of Singapore Graduate Medical School. He was also Chairman of the Governing Council of the Dover Park Hospice. From 1997 to 2011, he was the Director of Defence Medical and Environmental Research Institute (DMERI) of DSO National Laboratories. Professor Lee is currently Professor and Executive Vice-Dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITORS

BAPA

BAPA is a non-profit social organisation formed in 1957 and was registered as a society on 6 August 1960. Its objective was to uplift the education and economic status of the residents 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.

Earth Observatory of Singapore

The Earth Observatory of Singapore conducts fundamental research on earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and climate change in and around Southeast Asia, towards safer and more sustainable societies.

For more information, please visit www.earthobservatory.sg

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 www.mercyrelief.org

Save the Children

Save the Children is an international non-governmental organization that promotes children's rights, provides relief and helps support children in developing countries. It was established in the United Kingdom in 1919 in order to improve the lives of children through better education, health care, and economic opportunities, as well as providing emergency aid in natural disasters, war, and other conflicts.

For more information, please visit www.savethechildren.org

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**](http://www.worldvision.org.sg)

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Programme

The Asia Pacific is the most disaster prone region of the world. Between 2004 and 2013, more than 40% of natural disasters occurred in the Asia-Pacific region. In the last ten years, 80% of deaths due to disasters happened in Asia and the Pacific (ADB). By 2025, seven of the world's top ten mega-cities will be in Asia. Rapid urbanization and climate change have led to more frequent and recurring disasters with greater impact. (McKinsey & Co.)

RSIS established the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme on 21 July 2015 to facilitate and enhance cooperation on preparedness and response strategies to the fragile and unpredictable situations we face in the Asia-Pacific.

Aside from comprehensively investigating regional emergency response frameworks, governance issues, disaster preparedness strategies 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 roundtable sessions, dialogues and workshops. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre>.

Core Research Areas
Future HADR Landscape in Asia: Structures and Mechanisms
Community Protection and Assistance
Humanitarian Technology

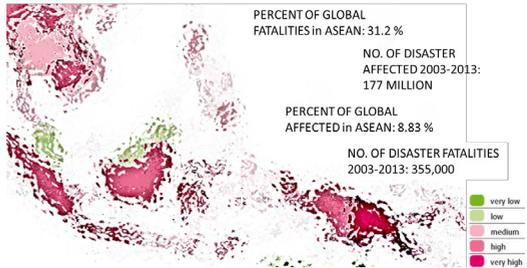


Foreign military forces assisted the Philippine government's relief efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.



Typhoon Haiyan killed at least 7,000 people and flattened many impoverished communities, triggering massive international humanitarian relief operations in the Philippines in 2013.

Natural Disasters: Humanitarian Response in ASEAN



Key Mechanisms:

- ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)
- ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)
- ASEAN Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercises (ARDEX)
- Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT)
- Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Coordination Centre
- Disaster Emergency Logistic System for ASEAN

Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief



Number of people affected per township:
■ Less than 1,000 people
■ 1,000 - 5,000 people
■ 5,000 - 25,000 people
■ More than 25,000 people

1.3 million people reached with food assistance in July and August.
 435,000 cumulative number of households displaced.

Myanmar Flood 2015

Heavy rains have caused floods and landslides in several parts of the country during the last two weeks of July. Cyclone Komen, that made landfall in Bangladesh on 30 July, has brought strong winds, heavy rains resulting in floods and landslides in several states and regions in Myanmar.

Photos of recent flood in Myanmar. The flood is regarded as one of the worst disasters in decades (Credit: www.channelnewsasia.com, www.flicker.com)

Figure 1. Number of people affected by recent flood in Myanmar
Source: www.unocha.org/myanmar

About the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)

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. The 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 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

The Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia was re-launched in February 2016. The NTS Centre at RSIS leads and coordinates this Consortium. The aims of the consortium are as follows:

- To develop a platform for networking and intellectual exchange between regional NTS scholars and analysts
- To build long-term and sustainable regional capacity for research on NTS issues
- To mainstream and advance the field of non-traditional security studies in Asia
- To collate and manage a regional database of NTS publications and other resources

For more information on the consortium, please visit the NTS-Asia website: www.rsis-ntsasia.org/





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