REPORT

ROUNDTABLE ON CHALLENGES TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

CO-ORGANISED BY

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This report summarises the proceedings of the Roundtable as interpreted by the rapporteurs and editors of the RSIS Centre for NTS Studies. This report adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current global humanitarian system is widely acknowledged as no longer being fit for purpose. As natural disasters and internal conflicts increase over the years, there is a corresponding increase in the number of actors involved in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief [HADR]. However, the growth in the number of actors has not translated into increased effectiveness and efficiency in HADR operations. The lack of coordination among the various actors is one of the key identified problems which has resulted in unnecessary duplicity of effort, wastage of resources, tensions among various parties involved, and delays in ensuring timely relief to affected populations. Different actors have competing agendas and biases, despite having the stated common goal to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Information sharing among HADR stakeholders remains problematic, which leads to a lack of coordination. Humanitarian actors may have different and even incomplete perceptions of a disaster situation which can hamper the coordination efforts. There is a lack of trust between stakeholders which inhibits communication and the flow of information. This remains one of the main reasons behind coordination problems. In general there is an unwillingness to share information results in the field, which results in different awareness levels of the same disaster situation, and leads to inefficient responses.

In conducting humanitarian assistance, especially in conflict-afflicted communities, the military wants that all humanitarian responders to coordinate with them to ensure their safety. However, some organisations are wary of working with the military as they are keen to preserve their principle of neutrality and independence in conflict settings. Regular constructive engagements between civilian organisations and the military may help the latter better secure humanitarian actors in accessing affected civilians in conflict areas, while respecting the fundamental principles of humanitarian action. Regular dialogue among all HADR stakeholders may help them achieve common situational awareness which can lead to more coordinated, faster and better services to conflict-afflicted communities.

NGOs and militaries have different approaches when it comes to the protection of vulnerable communities. Militaries and the police tend to use armed protection to ensure the physical protection of vulnerable communities. NGOs have a wider range of responses such as public awareness campaigns, emergency relief, psychosocial support, and advocacy measures with governments, donors, parties to conflict, community leaders, and local authorities.

It is imperative to have a much greater level of cooperation by all actors involved on multiple levels. No single agency or country can deal with the aftermath of humanitarian emergencies, including interrelated protection issues. International organisations, governments, militaries, local communities, private sector, and academia will all need to work together and cooperate with one another. Cooperation and partnerships can also lead to greater levels of trust, transparency, accountability and improved HADR governance structures.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one important protection issue that requires immediate attention of and collaboration among key actors. However, it is not often a government policy priority prior to disasters. The unspoken nature of SGBV along with the failure of national

policies, responders, and of the local communities to really understand the effects of SGBV means that it is a silent disaster. A number of factors exacerbate risks of SGBV which include the increased number of actors involved; increased 'chaos' and opportunities for SGBV; increased levels of separation from family, friends and support networks; social taboos; breakdown in social protection mechanisms; and lack of state support to the victims.

In the Asia-Pacific, there are still many cases of SGBV due to deeply rooted gender inequality as well as discriminatory socio-cultural norms and practices. To correctly address SGBV and discrimination, a change of mindset and perspective are needed as regulations and policies alone cannot change the lives of victims. While governments often sympathize with the victims, the issue is still not considered as a major problem. It needs to be complemented with financial support for capacity building, partnership and coordination at the local level, as well as a blueprint for development design at the district and provincial levels to help serve the needs of victims in the aftermath of a natural disaster or conflict.

Research from the academic community is an area that is going to be very important and influential in order to find ways to address challenges to HADR including delicate protection issues such SGBV; but at the same time research also should be practical and should contribute to agenda-setting. It should also ensure that research projects make available to the humanitarian actors and practitioners the tools that they need to better empower vulnerable populations. Any academic pursuit in the field of HADR will be meaningless if it does not generate insights and/or concrete recommendations to improve the situation on the ground.

In an effort to bring together stakeholders from across the spectrum of HADR, this Roundtable is organised through the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Programme at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The first part of the Roundtable focuses on two core HADR issues: the protection of and assistance to vulnerable communities in natural disaster and conflict settings. It attempts to map the emerging challenges for HADR actors and assess the effectiveness of HADR in recent years. The second part of the Roundtable focuses on a specific HADR challenge: gender-based and sexual violence in natural disaster and conflict settings, with particular focus on identifying the protection needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and best practices in assisting victims and managing cases of SGBV.

OVERVIEW SESSION: CHALLENGES TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

The overview session set out the current landscape of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). It accentuated some of the main challenges faced by humanitarian actors and the need for cooperation among all stakeholders to overcome such challenges.

The current global humanitarian system has been facing daunting challenges. The existing system can no longer adequately address the current needs of vulnerable communities in natural disaster and conflict settings. Conflicts and natural disasters, becoming more intense and destructive, continue to overwhelm humanitarian relief efforts.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, there are serious concerns over the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand and West Papua in Indonesia, amongst others. There are also concerns over the possibility of renewed violence in Sri Lanka, unresolved disputes in the Korean peninsula, and the aftermath of decades-long Indochina wars in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Asia-Pacific economies have taken great strides in the last couple of decades as can be seen from their high economic growth rates. Paradoxically, however, the region has been witnessing heightened inequality, human insecurity issues, and complex humanitarian crises. In terms of responding to disasters alone, even developed countries like Japan which have some of the region's best disaster preparedness systems in place have had difficulty in addressing the aftermath of large-scale disasters such as the Fukushima nuclear accident. It is even more worrying when we look into countries vulnerable

to disasters but which have far fewer capabilities.

Therefore, it becomes important to take relevant lessons from the experiences of humanitarian actors in the field. It is likewise crucial to understand 'vulnerabilities' and what 'protection' means in order to come up with responsive strategies that better protect vulnerable communities and sectors. Humanitarian actors should now be more responsive to discuss and address sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and natural disaster settings, which are often underreported and ignored. It also means looking into complex issues like accountability, transparency and governance of HADR.

Greater need for coordination

As natural disasters and conflicts increase over the years, there is a corresponding increase in the number of actors involved in HADR. They include government agencies, militaries, faith-based organisations, local and international NGOs, private sector organisations as well as intergovernmental institutions. The growth in the number of actors has however not translated into increased effectiveness and efficiency in HADR operations proportionally. More organisations are now competing for the limited amount of humanitarian aid. In fact, 85 per cent of global humanitarian aid goes to only one per cent of humanitarian organisations.

There is a lack of coordination among the various actors, which is one of the key identified problems which has resulted in unnecessary duplicity of efforts, wastage of resources, tensions among

various parties involved, and delays in delivering relief to affected populations on time. There is a need to have much better and strengthened coordination both vertically and horizontally among all actors involved.

There are underlying reasons for the lack of cooperation among all actors. One of the factors is trust among the parties. Firstly, oftentimes different actors have competing agendas and biases, despite having the stated common goal of the fast delivery of humanitarian assistance. For instance, some NGOs often prefer not to work with the militaries, especially in conflict settings. Secondly, actors who depend on funding for operations and survival tend to view each other as competitors rather than partners.

Cooperation and partnerships on HADR

In recent years, most disasters [natural, man-made (e.g., conflict), and technological] have transboundary implications and no single government can respond to any humanitarian crisis on its own. Without proper cooperation among all humanitarian actors, HADR is going to be a daunting challenge.

Given the scale and scope of challenges faced by HADR efforts at present, it is imperative to have a much greater level of cooperation by all actors involved on multiple levels. No single agency or country can deal with the aftermath of humanitarian emergencies. International organisations, governments, militaries, local communities, private sector, and academia will all need to work together and cooperate with one another. Cooperation is urgently required in terms of information sharing—that is sharing resources and capabilities, local know-how, and information on cultural sensitivities, to better ensure swift delivery of relief/aid and the protection of vulnerable populations. Instead of focusing on competing for limited resources, all HADR

stakeholders should collaborate to empower vulnerable local communities and community organisations in building resilience.

Cooperation and partnerships can also lead to greater levels of trust, transparency, accountability and improved HADR governance structures. Apart from allowing the involvement of a greater number of actors, better cooperation would also mean fewer chances of bigger HADR agencies dominating smaller, newer players who might be able to offer a different set of capabilities and perspectives. Exploring ways to cooperate with the private sector as partners, for example, can potentially lead to new ideas and technological humanitarian innovations.

Linking academic research to ground realities

It is already clear that there is a need to re-think and re-design the HADR system to adapt to the needs and challenges of the 21st century. However, this can only be started and done with the help of concrete, coherent, evidence-based information and knowledge. The research and teaching agenda of the academic community can help in this effort.

However, any academic pursuit in the field of HADR will be meaningless if it does not generate insights and/or concrete recommendations to improve the situation on the ground. There is a risk that academic pursuits which do not directly contribute sound policy recommendations can potentially take away resources from the pool of limited funds allocated for HADR without delivering benefits for the affected communities and people. It is thus going to be important for academia to work closely with practitioners and institutions involved in HADR in order to ensure that the output of the academic endeavours is eventually useful and practical.

The fast evolving field of information and

technology is an example of one avenue where research will be useful. While humanitarian technology can have positive impact on HADR efforts, there are some fundamental questions which remain to be answered. These include (1) how can we make sure that technology introduced in HADR will help both the responders and communities than causing more harm?; (2) who will decide on which technology is appropriate or not?; (3) what kind of guiding principles and standards that needs to be adopted?; and (4) how do we ensure that the agreed upon standards are adopted by both big and small actors?

Discussion

The perceived crisis in HADR stems largely from the fact that most of the important actors on the field have outdated modes of practice and understanding of crises and disasters that date back to 19th and 20th century. For instance, sexual and gender violence were too sensitive for HADR actors that they chose not to address it. As a result some of the HADR institutions have been caught off-guard and unable to fully deal with 21st century realities. While there are extremely valuable lessons which have been gained over the past century in HADR which continue to be relevant and should not be ignored, there is also now a need to better understand and effectively respond to some of the new regional and global issues, be it political, economic and environmental.

Another significant challenge has been in the varying expectations, interests, mandates and biases among the various HADR institutions and actors, despite all having the same overall goal in HADR. This creates tension and difficulties in cooperation and coordination at times. Overcoming the tensions and competing interests among actors as soon as possible is critical to remove difficulties in cooperation among them.

Some of the ideas and recommendations offered in this session to improve the overall HADR system were the following:
 (1) Institutions and actors should start measuring outputs, efficiency and effectiveness and not just overheads.
(2) providing protection must move beyond the realm of just giving shelter, food and water and towards understanding the bigger landscape of threats from natural disasters and conflicts like susceptibility to trafficking, sexual and gender violence, as well as the provision of safe long-term shelters and reunification of families.
(3) Given that they are important groups to take into consideration in institutionalising a new HADR system, youth and diaspora organisations must be roped in and engaged in the discussion when possible as they have become increasingly involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid in recent years.

HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT IN NATURAL DISASTER SETTINGS

This session looked into the challenges to coordination among humanitarian actors and to the swift delivery of humanitarian aid. It also deliberated on policy strategies to address such challenges.

Humanitarian support in natural disaster settings involves multiple actors. While the participation of more actors normatively implies more assistance and better results, in reality humanitarian relief efforts are faced with a lot of challenges. The three dimensions of humanitarian assistance are coordination among key humanitarian actors, delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the efficiency of providing assistance.

Challenges to coordination among key humanitarian actors

Although the sheer amount of information may be available in the aftermath of a natural disaster, the different and incomplete pictures that humanitarian actors perceive of a disaster situation can hamper the coordination efforts of key responders. The varying understandings of the same disaster setting often result in gaps and overlaps in the delivery of aid and resources. Information availability alone, therefore, is not enough to ensure good coordination among various humanitarian actors. Sharing of information is needed to harmonise the situational awareness and facilitate better coordination among them.

While the lack of coordination is often cited as one of the issues in humanitarian assistance, there are alternative views observing otherwise. Humanitarian efforts involve a large number of stakeholders at the same time, and for it to happen, humanitarian actors are required to stay innovative and dynamic. For the last twenty years, disaster relief efforts have been progressing well. In the recent earthquake disaster in Nepal, for example, national, regional, and international teams came together to provide support. There must have been some degree of coordination involved to organise myriad actors on the ground.

A lack of coordination may very well be the result of unwillingness of some actors to engage in any cooperation initiatives. Similarly, it was argued that the issue of competition and overlapping humanitarian efforts could be the result of one's own making since there are even cases where more manpower and resources are actually needed to help disaster-affected communities. In Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was ratified to facilitate coordination among ASEAN member states in responding to disaster situations.[1] It provides the legal basis for effective mechanisms and joint responses. While ASEAN does not take over the role of member-states in leading the relief efforts, it provides the avenue for member-states and dialogue partners to work together through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre). The AADMER also sets the norms and standards which the member-states can adopt in their national disaster relief framework.

HADR is increasingly becoming an essential element of diplomatic and defence relations. Pre-disaster multi-national coordination exercises and information sharing are conducted based on diplomatic and defence relations. Assisting foreign governments and military forces need to seek first the permission of concerned national governments. The absence of warm defence and foreign relations, therefore, inhibits effective and speedy relief efforts as foreign military forces need

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[1] ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, Vientiane, Laos, 26 July 2005.

to rely on their local counterparts to obtain the needed information. In Southeast Asia, Singapore set up the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) to fill the gap in coordination and information sharing among the militaries in the region. While it does not intend to replace the AHA Centre there is a need to look into the structures and mandates of existing regional and intergovernmental coordinating bodies such as the AHA Centre, UN OCHA and RHCC to ensure wider coverage and avoid overlapping functions.

Challenges to delivery of humanitarian aid

Local responders from affected communities are critical in disaster situations as they have the direct access to affected areas. They are ordinary people found within the communities and they normally act on voluntary basis. Currently, community-based volunteers are not well-equipped with the necessary skills to respond to disasters and deliver immediate relief goods. As volunteers form the basis for future disaster relief efforts, focusing on building their capacity through training is key to community empowerment and effective disaster response.

Inadequate infrastructure also often becomes problematic when huge volume of relief goods arrive in affected countries at about the same time. The capacity of existing roads and airports may not be sufficient to accommodate the sudden huge influx of flights and other modes of logistical delivery. This often results in long delay and immense backlog in the delivery of relief goods and points to the need for more robust preparedness and recovery efforts.

The presence of unsolicited goods and relief teams creates additional burden to affected countries as many of the goods are neither needed nor culturally appropriate. Furthermore, such reliefs may be loaded with political motives as aiding countries may want to be seen as providing assistance even if such help may not be necessary. Moreover, humanitarian aid does not only entail basic relief items but also includes rebuilding of homes, restoration of sources of livelihood, health care services, and even psychosocial assistance. But currently, these sectors are still underfunded.

Aid delivery can also be hampered by a number of issues that volunteers face in their own country of residence. Time lag to give out funding due to bureaucratic procedures in their own country, complicated documentation, inability to get leave from workplace on a short notice, lack of training to manage larger funds, difficulty in finding local partner, difficulty in monitoring the intended outcomes of the relief efforts, unexpected inflation rate, and difficulty to get approval for fundraising are some of the issues that frustrate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Underlying causes

One primary cause of coordination among humanitarian actors is the lack of trust among them which inhibits communication and flow of information. Unwillingness to share information results in varying situational awareness of the same disaster situation, and leads to inefficient responses.

As information sharing is important to ensure effective delivery of relief efforts, distrust towards each other's agenda and intentions inevitably hampers communication and coordination efforts. It is therefore highly recommended that humanitarian actors need to keep an open heart and mind to work with each other and gradually gain the trust of each other.

Although the involvement of the military in HADR has always been part of the response mechanism in the Asia-Pacific, the issue of distrust between military and civilian actors remain. The question on whether the military should be the first responders

or the last resort is often raised. Undeniably, the military has an important role to play as they possess the logistical capability to reach out to remote places and provide necessary manpower to back up volunteers and other civilian counterparts at short notice. As military and civilian institutions work differently, the military feels the need to learn to work efficiently with more established and professional civilian organisations.

Other motivations behind the delivery of aid also disrupts humanitarian efforts as relief goods may not reach the most affected areas or the populations who need them the most because they are intentionally directed to some other areas or groups, for various motivations including political ones.

Discussion

Joint pre-disaster simulation exercises are important to understand the different capabilities of each national military involved. The exercises also help detect possible coordination gaps. Despite such exercises, real life situations may present completely different challenges and different interests may also arise on the ground. Foreign military involvement in some disaster-hit countries remains a sensitive issue, and it is important to observe and respect the comfort level of affected countries in receiving foreign assistance.

The complementarity between civilian and military institutions is evidenced in a number of issues. While the military prefers command and control strategy to strengthen coordination, it acknowledges that such strategy cannot be always applied to all stakeholders during disaster response. Context plays an important role, and understanding community structure, history, and cultural sensitivity is critical in humanitarian efforts. In this regard, civilian organisations that are relatively flexible and contextual and do not

function based on command and control can be much more alert, innovative, open, and they can adapt a lot quicker to the situations on the ground compared to their military counterparts. While the military can provide the needed equipment and manpower, they lack special skills and policies to handle specific vulnerable sectors within the community such as women and children. The military believes that their civilian counterparts are more advanced in terms of child safeguarding training, capacity, and monitoring.

To address concerns surrounding coordination in times of emergencies humanitarian actors may setup the cluster system upon consultation and approval of the recipient country. Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations working in the main sectors of humanitarian assistance such as food and shelter. They are created when coordination of humanitarian work is needed in a particular sector. They provide clear focal point of contact and build partnerships between international humanitarian actors, national and local governments and the civil society. However the system does not always work as some countries would be hesitant to adopt this model as they sometimes perceive it to carry foreign agenda. Moreover, in some cases, involved agencies and organisations within a cluster do not adequately cooperate with each other.

Nevertheless, some efforts to institutionalise cluster-based coordination system have been made in Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vanuatu.

In Southeast Asia, to enhance coordination among countries and to attain the broader goal of the ASEAN Community, member-states are encouraged to utilise the AHA Centre as the platform for disaster relief cooperation. Nonetheless, the AHA Centre is indeed not meant to take the leading role in humanitarian assistance efforts; rather, it complements national disaster response and coordination efforts.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

This session tackled the military perspective on the importance of civil-military coordination in conducting humanitarian assistance in conflict-afflicted communities. It also covered the reasons why some NGOs are hesitant to coordinate with the military, as they argued that they must always follow the humanitarian principles -- neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Several countries in the Asia-Pacific region still host protracted internal conflicts that have already killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and displaced millions of people from their communities. Conflicts continue in the Philippines, Myanmar, southern Thailand, and Pakistan. According to OCHA, 30 per cent of the world's active conflicts occurred in the Asia-Pacific region in 2014.[2] Conflict-afflicted communities in the region are also vulnerable to natural disasters, complicating the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid to those in need.

Internal conflicts pose risks to the safety of humanitarian workers and may render vulnerable communities inaccessible for first responders.

The role of the military

In the Philippines, which was a case study cited in the session, there are regions that are not only hit by natural disasters but are also plagued by conflicts. The non-state armed groups include the communist armed movement, Muslim secessionist rebels, and private armed groups. Their presence in disaster-hit regions, primarily in eastern and southern Philippines, has undermined the security environment in those areas, impeding the flow of humanitarian aid and responders.

The military has been serving as among the first responders in humanitarian emergencies and conducting massive humanitarian operations in the aftermath of a natural disaster. In the case of Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, for instance, the military provided the needed logistical requirements to immediately evacuate affected residents and transport rescuers and relief goods. The military likewise believed that it is their duty to provide security cover for all humanitarian actors to ensure safety of humanitarians given that non-state armed groups were present in the affected provinces. The military also provided NGOs with security advisories whether they could safely proceed to the affected communities, based on the military's security assessment. However, the military felt that there was reluctance on the part of some humanitarians to work with military.

Nevertheless, the military recognises that the humanitarian operations should always be led by civilian government agencies and that they would have to stand ready to provide the necessary assets and personnel in assisting their civilian counterparts, including volunteers from civil society organisations. And in disaster-hit areas where there are also active conflicts, it is deemed crucial that non-partisan civilian agencies, particularly the concerned local governments, and organisations should lead the operations.

The military highlights the importance of effective civil-military coordination in conducting security assessment of vulnerable communities even prior to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Given the delicate security situation in conflict settings, military and civilian responders must build on each other's strengths to have common situational awareness of the affected areas and ensure the safety of the responders. Civil-military

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[2] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2014. World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2014. Geneva: UN OCHA.

coordination would also allow responders to avoid duplication of efforts and better planning on what priorities that need to be addressed. The military prefers that there should be clear lines of coordination and communication with concerned local military forces through civil military coordinators.

Neutrality and independence of humanitarian workers

The military recommends that humanitarian organisations work closely with the military in delivering humanitarian aid in conflict areas. However, NGOs found it difficult to operate in contexts where armed groups are fragmented and impartial humanitarian aid is rejected. Whenever they have to coordinate with the military in conflict zones, some NGOs are worried that their credibility being neutral and impartial organisations would be undermined.

NGOs argue that the safety of their aid workers and capacity to reach those most in need depend on their unswerving compliance with humanitarian principles. For them, the best tool to safely gain access to vulnerable communities in conflict-afflicted areas is by staying neutral in any ongoing conflict and avoiding any perception that it works with the partisan armed forces. Consequently, they tend to operate outside the national response system and even outside the U.N system. They do not want armed protection as they believe that their security depends on acceptance and dialogue. But the only sustainable measure to guarantee the security of humanitarian workers in conflict areas is by eradicating the underlying causes of conflicts.

Addressing the root causes of *conflicts*

Given that disasters are not the only causes of suffering in conflict-afflicted communities but also poverty, inequality and instability, all humanitarian actors, including the military and NGOs should also invest in addressing the roots of protracted internal conflicts. It was recommended that humanitarian assistance should go beyond merely delivering aid to affected communities. It should now entail investing in peacebuilding efforts in vulnerable communities, most of which are now in both "disaster risk trap and conflict trap." This means that international humanitarian assistance alone is neither sufficient nor appropriate to address the scale and complexity of today's humanitarian crises, or the underlying drivers of instability, poverty and vulnerability. Some 93 per cent of people living globally in extreme poverty are in countries that are either politically fragile, environmentally vulnerable or both. According to U.N. OCHA, 1.38 million people were displaced, 35 per cent of which were in Myanmar, due to internal conflicts in the Asia-Pacific in 2014.[3] According to Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015, the funding allocation for international humanitarian response, sourced through mostly state donations, went up to US$12.6 billion in 2014 from US$8.5 billion in 2013. However, the unmet funding requirement amounted to US$7.5 billion in 2014.[4] In recent years, there have been increasing state donations for humanitarian assistance in conflicts and complex emergencies but still not enough to meet the needs of conflict-affected communities globally. Humanitarian aid in Asia-Pacific doubled in 2014, amounted to US$1.27 billion, compared to 2013. The top aid recipients in the region in 2014 were the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand.[5]

It was emphasised that peacebuilding, i.e., the prevention of the recurrence of internal conflicts, should be regarded as an important phase of humanitarian assistance in conflict settings. However, the annual budget in 2015 of the U.N. for peacebuilding effort is just US$93.87 million, or merely 0.1 per cent of U.N. Peacekeeping Office. Peacebuilding efforts include support to the implementation of peace agreements and peace negotiations, promotion of peaceful resolution of

[3] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2014. Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Bulletin 2014. Bangkok: UN OCHA.
[4] Sophia Swithern. 2015. Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015. Bristol: Global Humanitarian Assistance-A Development Initiative.
[5] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 2014. Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Bulletin 2014. Bangkok: UN OCHA.

conflict, revitalisation of the national economy to generate peace dividends, and revival of essential government services. Beyond humanitarian assistance, there is a need to understand and better mobilize other resources, both public and private in order to end poverty, reduce vulnerability and build resilience in conflict-afflicted communities.

Discussion

In peacebuilding, it is crucial to have national ownership which involves not only political leadership but also the robust participation of the local civil society, including grassroots organisations, and even the vulnerable communities themselves. The political leadership must have a long-term vision towards national reconciliation. The United Nations, regional intergovernmental organisations and international NGOs can boost the efforts of the domestic stakeholders in containing protracted conflicts and assisting vulnerable communities through peacebuilding and providing humanitarian assistance.

The military encourages humanitarian organisations to educate national policy-makers and soldiers on how humanitarians work, including educating them on human rights norms and international humanitarian law.

From the perspective of NGOs, they try to be as diplomatic as possible to any involved parties on the ground, including the military, in negotiating for access to vulnerable communities by conducting such negotiations behind closed doors, if necessary, so that they can uphold their principles of impartiality and neutrality but at the same to be able to serve the needs of the affected communities. Nonetheless, humanitarian workers have the obligation to have sufficient monitoring mechanisms to assess the security situation on the ground for their safety. They must always follow the existing international and domestic legal

frameworks on providing humanitarian assistance in conflict settings.

Regular constructive engagement between civilian organisations and the military may help the latter better secure humanitarian actors in accessing affected civilians in conflict areas. Regular dialogues among all HADR stakeholders help achieve common situational awareness which can lead to more coordinated, faster and better services to conflict-afflicted communities.

UNDERSTANDING PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN NATURAL DISASTER AND CONFLICT SETTINGS

This session focused on the various approaches towards protection of vulnerable communities and children in natural disaster and conflict settings by various humanitarian actors, including the definitions of vulnerabilities and protection. It highlighted the protection efforts done by NGOs, governments, militaries, and regional institutions as well as discussed the legal frameworks for the protection of vulnerable communities and disaster risk reduction.

Defining protection and vulnerabilities

As explained by most humanitarian organisations, vulnerable communities do not have robust access to state's social services and/or are incapable to protect themselves from any form of violence committed against them. Thus, protection needs arise as they are unable to defend their basic interests or receive adequate safeguards from authorities resulting in humanitarian consequences and suffering. How protection activities are carried out is dependent on how vulnerability is defined. Protection issues in natural disaster and conflict settings include lack of safety and security, gender-based violence, unequal access, child abuse and exploitation, family separation, loss/destruction of documents, inadequate law enforcement, forced relocation, and unsafe or involuntary return/resettlement.

Once vulnerabilities are identified, relevant protection measures can be implemented accordingly. For example, victims of sexual violence should be provided with immediate protection such as medical evacuation and other steps to restore the dignity of the victim. This is followed by medium to long term intervention to help them overcome their trauma. The community is also educated on what sexual violence is which would help to remove any stigma on the victims. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from conflict-affected communities should be given 'conducive conditions' for return, local reintegration or settlement, including safety and security of IDPs and refugees, freedom from harassment and intimidation, protection from human trafficking, adequate housing, and access to basic services. The cultural and religious traditions of indigenous peoples and marginalised groups need to be always respected by humanitarian actors.

Protecting vulnerable communities

Whether needs-based or rights-based, NGOs and militaries have different approaches when it comes to the protection of vulnerable communities. Militaries and the police tend to use armed protection to ensure the physical protection of vulnerable communities. NGO actors, however, have a wider range of responses. Some NGOs use public awareness campaigns, psychosocial support, and advocacy measures with governments, donors, parties to conflict, community leaders, and local authorities. Other organisations take a more diplomatic approach to talk about sensitive issues behind closed doors so as to gain access to affected communities while maintaining neutrality in order not to upset any parties.

Most international humanitarian NGOs follow three guiding principles when it comes to the protection of vulnerable communities. Firstly, by upholding the principle of neutrality and

independence authorities and other humanitarian actors must respect their obligation to deliver impartial aid and recognise the rights of the civilian population. Secondly, humanitarian concerns must be responsibly addressed through confidential dialogue with the vulnerable population. Finally, protection is a multidisciplinary action which aims to mobilise the wider community to respond to direct consequences of natural disasters and conflicts and reduce the risk exposure and vulnerabilities of the civilian population.

In providing protection to vulnerable communities in natural disaster and conflict settings, NGOs and military actors tend to work independently of each other. This is partly due to the sensitive nature of protection work of NGOs. Neutrality and independence are important principles for humanitarian organisations in order for them to provide vulnerable populations with the protection that they need, especially when working in a conflict setting. However, it they can still collaborate with the authorities and the military as the greater interest of vulnerable communities might be better served when humanitarian organisations are able to coordinate with military efforts. For collaboration to be successful both types of humanitarian actors must share similar visions of the direction of protection, and trust, confidentiality and inter-organisational dialogues are needed which can only be achieved through establishing long-term partnership.

Protecting children

Children are among the most vulnerable sectors in natural disaster and conflict settings. Millions of children are affected by natural disasters and conflicts affect every year. In 2014, 34,300 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied or separated children in 82 countries and 51 per cent of the refugee population consisted of children below the age of 18. Children become orphaned as a result of conflict and disasters and are easy targets for rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as recruitment as child soldiers.

The concept of "child protection" in conflict and natural disaster situations is a complex issue as it is multidimensional – covering protection from psychosocial, medical, sexual and military exploitation. Despite its large impact on humanitarian assistance, its inherent vagueness leaves it open for interpretation, resulting in inadequate support given to humanitarian efforts specifically aimed at protecting children. Nevertheless, child protection is a life-saving issue.

During humanitarian emergencies, children are exposed to a variety of extreme circumstances, some of which are beyond their capacity to cope. It is now accepted that in addition to meeting basic needs, such as food and shelter, it is essential to consider the emotional and developmental support of children. Hence, the current approach to child protection has moved away from targeting individual children or particular groups and instead focusing on creating a protective environment where children are secured from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination, with an emphasis on psychosocial wellbeing and support. Programmatic responses to such emergencies include identifying separated and unaccompanied children in all locations, providing support through alternative care systems, attempt reunification through family tracing and ensuring refugee camp managers and community child protection groups are educated on reporting and assisting separated or unaccompanied children. However, protection efforts should expand beyond reactive response mechanisms and incorporate preparedness-based prevention policies especially strengthening existing community support and protection to monitor the situation of child exploitation.

Regional framework on protection in ASEAN

At the national level, protection of civilian

populations in natural disaster and conflict settings is the responsibility of the state. However, at the regional level, neighbouring states should be expected to cooperate with each other to build regional mechanisms for mutual cooperation, assistance and capacity building for civilian protection in the region, given that the consequences of disasters and internal conflicts can be transboundary in nature.

It is therefore crucial to further the aims of humanitarian protection of vulnerable populations by creating a normative "culture of protection" in a region. This normative mind-set should be part of the way regional organisations like ASEAN perceives the various protection issues and embedded in the regional efforts on HADR.

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was ratified by all member-states, which serves as a regional framework for their joint response to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.[6] It serves as the foundation for disaster management initiatives in the region, including for the establishment of AHA Centre. However, critics argue that AADMER and AHA Centre focus only on natural disasters but have less attention to protecting communities in complex emergencies/conflicts due to the region's principle of non-interference. To date, AADMER's monitoring and evaluation framework is more region-focused, with limited reporting on developments at national level.

Discussion

The protection of vulnerable communities has been recognised as primarily a state responsibility. However, states may not always have the capacity to protect their citizens in both natural disaster and conflict settings. It was therefore strongly recommended that regional institutions like ASEAN play a stronger role in coordinating assistance efforts, including protection mechanisms. However, in terms of capability to do so, the AHA centre remains a work in progress and more time is needed to build its capability.

Apart from facilitating effective coordination among member-states and even with regional partners, regional institutions also have an important role in advancing normative frameworks which can shape the region's HADR practices through (1) embedding normative agreement that protecting populations is primary responsibility of state; (2) building mechanisms and expectations for mutual cooperation, assistance and capacity building for civilian protection in the region; (3) regularising practices of mutual accountability through monitoring and evaluation; and (4) promoting 'culture of prevention', focusing on the root causes of vulnerability of communities.

It is deemed critical that regional bodies such as ASEAN advance normative frameworks that are sensitive to cultural, political and economic contexts given the diverse conditions among member-states. But more importantly, regional normative frameworks should take a goal-oriented approach towards reducing loss of life through enhanced civilian protection measures. And in order to better develop and enhance regional and national protection frameworks and improve institutional capacities and operations, more constructive dialogues amongst the HADR stakeholders should be held at the regional, national, and local levels. Regional normative frameworks should also be complemented by a national legal framework that is both comprehensive enough to cover both rights-based and needs-based approaches to the protection of vulnerable populations.

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[6] ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, Vientiane, Laos, 26 July 2005.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT SETTINGS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NATURAL DISASTER SETTINGS

This session analysed common cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in both natural disaster and conflict settings, exploring sectors most vulnerable to SGBV, the needs of victims, the applicable legal frameworks, and the challenges in addressing SGBV.

SGBV as a silent disaster

SGBV is an umbrella term for harmful acts that result or are likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, man, girl or boy on the basis of their sex or gender. It has become a critical public health and humanitarian concern and has victimised vulnerable sectors such as women and children due to its unspoken nature, making it a silent disaster. SGBV has many forms that do not necessarily involve the use of physical violence on the victim and can be perpetuated against or by women, girls, men and boys. SGBV could be in the form of sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation or domestic slavery, sexual harassment, forced or early marriage, harmful traditional practices, gender-based discrimination, and forced prostitution. In addition, men and boys, who could also be vulnerable to SGBV at a lesser extent, have specific needs due to the added taboo attached to violence against them. In many cases, the protection needs of women are also mistakenly associated to those of men. But in reality, the issues affecting safety and protection may be different between women and men and boys and girls.

Gender inequality in many societies has been acknowledged as the primary root cause of SGBV, according to cross cultural studies from different

regions. Based on these studies, there is a direct correlation in rising SGBV cases and worsening gender equality indicators. Women, children, and even men who do not conform to society's concepts of masculinity are usually more at risk of violence as a result of their gender. In many case studies cited, despite the prevalence of SGBV in disaster and conflict areas, most of the humanitarian actors consider it as a sensitive issue and are not keen to directly address it. While it can be preventable, the unspoken nature of SGBV along with the failure of national policymakers, responders, and the local communities to really understand the effects of SGBV and deal with it as a protection issue makes it a silent disaster.

Exacerbating factors to SGBV during natural disasters and conflicts

In humanitarian emergencies, a number of factors exacerbate risks of SGBV. The exacerbating factors include the increased number of actors involved; increased 'chaos' and opportunities for SGBV; increased levels of separation from family, friends and support networks; decreased family cohesion; interrupted social protection mechanisms; breakdown in health and regular social services; lack of access to justice and safety decreases; and lack of appropriate assistance from the state.

Many women and girls experience sexual violence and harassment due to the absence of male family members, lack of privacy, lack of economic independence, and physical insecurity. Additionally, young women and children from poor and devastated communities are being targeted by human traffickers. They also have limited access to health services and education

due to security concerns.

Weak reintegration policies after a crisis increased risk of SGBV due to insecurity of temporary shelters. Government intervention should include basic measures to ensure gender-specific programs consulting both women and men and in coordination with national and international humanitarian actors to identify needs and appropriate responses. As security and protection issues are different between women and girls and boys and men, measures should be tailored to particular vulnerabilities.

Analysis of recent humanitarian emergencies such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Pakistan Floods, the New Zealand and Haiti Earthquakes reveal the increasing incidence of SGBV such as forced marriage, rape by rescue workers, increased cases of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse of children on mass scale, and transactional sex.

In the 2004 tsunami, stories emerged in Sri Lanka of women being raped by their rescuers. Reports of rape, gang rape and sexual abuse in IDP camps in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar also occurred in other emergency settings. In Indonesia that many girls were forcibly married due to economic burden, demands for dowries and from a belief amongst families that girls would be protected from sexual violence or poverty. Following the bushfires in southern Australia in 2009, and the subsequent Christchurch Earthquake in New Zealand, local domestic violence centres in both countries measures a 400 per cent increase in referrals for new domestic violence.

Physical, psychological, socio-economic consequences of SGBV affect victims, families and communities. The needs of the victim, primarily relate to medical care, safety and survival. Medical care requires protection of the medical mission in both natural disaster and conflict settings to ensure safe access to vulnerable sectors. Barriers to emergency health care include ignorance of the need for health care and misconception that pregnancy is the only consequence of SGBV. Despite knowledge of the consequences, victims may fear retaliation and feel shame. Medical structures too may be damaged and travel to such facilities may be dangerous for both victims and medical staff.

Another exacerbating factor is the invisibility of the issue and culture of silence on SGBV within communities due to prevailing social and cultural taboos. Consequently humanitarian responders, who are not sensitise to SGBV, would not be able to immediately provide protection to vulnerable sectors given that most of them are not properly trained in cultural and gender sensitivity. In order to overcome this, knowledgeable community leaders and local NGOs should be empowered to educate communities on SGBV on dismantling taboos. This is based on the assumption that focusing on changing the attitudes of grassroots and community leaders so that they take action might be more impactful than relying too much on external and transitory relief workers.

Policy strategies to prevent SGBV

Legal frameworks prohibiting and incriminating SGBV exist in both natural disaster and conflict settings, namely international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law. Where conflict occurs there are a number of international conventions and legal instruments. In natural disasters, response to acts of violence is largely defined in national codes, and accountability for international actors is often dependent only on codes of conduct, policies and practice. Examples of international and regional frameworks include the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Bali Process, and the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence

against Women.[7]

The question is how these international legal frameworks can be better implemented at the state level rather than creating new laws. The challenge and the main risk is that these may not translate during a natural disaster primarily due to coordination challenges even amongst disaster management state agencies. Furthermore, there are still no overarching frameworks specific to natural disasters that are legally binding, instead we have a series of codes and protection protocols that do not offer the same recourse to justice as conflict-related SGBV. While several ASEAN states such as Brunei, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia have already adopted national laws and national action plans on the prevention of violence against women, they are not enough to protect women and children from gender-based violence in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Recommended strategies to address SGBV

To ensure that these national policies and action plans do translate into practical protection solutions to effectively address SGBV, it is crucial for humanitarian stakeholders to act on the basis that SGBV really exists, is not invisible, and requires immediate response in emergencies. It is also equally important that measures to prevent SGBV are mainstreamed in all disaster preparedness, response and recovery programmes and even in long-term development planning for vulnerable communities.

But in order to create effective preparedness plans with holistic SGBV measures and provide adequate response to emergencies, full consultation with beneficiaries are essential at the preparedness and risk reduction stage. Both men and women must be consulted in the design and implementation of programmes to ascertain what makes them feel safe and what they need to feel protected in the aftermath of a natural disaster. This consultation must continue once a natural disaster happens. Education and awareness raising are needed at all levels of an organisation – from volunteers and field staff up to the management as well as within the communities. Their involvement not only ensures that these policies and programmes address the root causes of SGBV vulnerabilities but also enhances their effective implementation.

SGBV measures are also needed to be mainstreamed at emergency response stage. First responders should be adequately equipped to provide health, psychosocial support and legal services – with trained professionals –for people affected by SGBV. Even the distribution of relief aid must be ensured that the goods being distributed are gender sensitive and that the process of distribution does not inadvertently place certain groups in more vulnerable positions. To ensure that the delivery of relief aid is gender sensitive, there should be male and female case workers and information dissemination should be widely available and be accessible to both men and women as well as people with disabilities or impairments.

Finally, at the post-disaster reconstruction phase, humanitarian actors can further institutionalise SGBV preventive measures by assisting affected communities rebuild shelter, sanitation, health and educational facilities which can be safely accessed by women and children.

Discussion

The increasing frequency of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific can provide a window of opportunity for humanitarian organisations, in collaboration with the academic community, to sensitise state agencies and regional bodies on the issue of SGBV. It would be strategic if humanitarian NGOs

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[7] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), New York, USA, 31 October 2000; Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, Sendai, Japan, 14-18 March 2015; Fourth Bali Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Bali, Indonesia, 29-30 March 2011; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region, Jakarta, Indonesia, 30 June 2004.

can further advance the issue of SGBV through their regular advocacy campaigns which may lead to awareness raising within communities and even relevant government officials, including the military.

More importantly, NGOs need to increase their constructive engagements with National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs), relevant national agencies and local authorities to get them more aware of the existence of SGBV through providing them with compelling cases. If state authorities become more conscious of the prevalence of SGBV cases, they would be able to institutionalise appropriate SGBV responses through enactment of impactful policies focusing on the victims.

Apart from legal protection, other forms of assistance can be given to the victims. For instance, both mainstream and social media can be utilised to extend psychological support to victims who are ashamed or afraid to come forward. In addition, several humanitarian organisations have already begun empowerment programmes for the victims and vulnerable sectors. Through these programmes, victims are trained to be economically self-sufficient while the concerned community is educated to accept the return of victims and support them during treatment and rehabilitation.

The community also needs to be further engaged to dismantle discriminatory socio-cultural norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality and SGBV. Various research studies on reasons why men perpetrate sexual violence overwhelmingly show that sexual entitlement is cited as the main reason. SGBV raises issues of masculinity which equals to power. Societies have different ways of talking about SGBV and humanitarian actors must contextualise their responses based on the community's existing cultural and societal institutions.

POLICY APPROACHES TO SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

The session explored the policy approaches, including legal and social aspects as well as psychosocial and ethical approaches, and best practices on SGBV in situations of conflicts as well as natural disasters. Several case studies on SGBV-related policy approaches in the Asia-Pacific region were also cited.

SGBV as a sensitive issue

Violence against women in conflict and natural disaster settings are committed by many actors, including the security forces deployed in the area as well as the opposing forces. While there have been many efforts done to address this issue in the Asia-Pacific, there still appears to be a need for further streamlining these efforts to ensure coherence of effective protection.

The lack of coherent policy response among humanitarian actors is primarily due to the sensitivity of SGBV. It is being considered a sensitive issue as there are still many misconceptions on the issue of SGBV. Major humanitarian actors still believe that it is not a life-threatening situation during humanitarian crises and as it often goes unreported, consequently, there is a tendency to overlook the issue. Many are still of the opinion that SGBV is a cultural issue, and humanitarian actors should respect that 'culture' and not intervene. As a result, there is limited prioritisation of GBV in the humanitarian agenda, especially at the onset of the natural disaster.

SGBV should only be considered sensitive when humanitarian actors do not possess clear or appropriate skills and programmes that can be applied to address the issue, which can pose a risk of jeopardizing the already existing efforts. It is therefore, highly crucial for actors wanting to get involved in addressing SGBV to invest in the right technical skills and mechanisms to ensure proper assistance to vulnerable sectors and SGBV victims.

Policy guidelines

The aforesaid misconception that SGBV is not a life-threatening issue has long been debunked by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Gender-Based Violence (IASC-GBV) Guidelines, which was published in 2005 but is currently under review.[8] The IASC-GBV Guidelines states that GBV is a life-threatening protection issue primarily affecting women and children. Therefore, it recommends that all humanitarian actors should immediately respond to SGBV from the early phase of an emergency to prevent its occurrence and provide appropriate assistance to survivors. The Guidelines is meant to provide the framework for minimum standards on addressing and preventing SGBV in both situations of conflict and natural disaster.

The minimum standards set forth by the Guidelines emphasise security, legal protection and justice as essential elements of the multi-sectoral SGBV prevention and response programmes. In emergencies, humanitarian actors tend to concentrate on life-saving health and psycho-social programmes without much emphasis on security and legal and justice programmes for SGBV victims. Long-lasting peace in conflict zones may be difficult to achieve unless the affected persons feel that a sense of justice has been done for violations faced by them. For this reason, justice initiatives are as important as peace initiatives.

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8   Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2005. Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Emergencies: Focusing on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence. Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Frequently, many of the realities of displacement and evacuation camp life converge to create conditions of insecurity, as well as obstacles to accessing justice –resulting in a general climate of fear and impunity in some camps. Many, if not most, of these SGBV violations involve survivors with little or no power, influence and financial resources. This is accentuated in the refugee or IDP camp, where they are now more disempowered than ever, have fewer options, and are at greater risk of various threats against their physical safety, general well-being, and even survival. The complexity of the issues and the dilemmas raised in relation to the administration of justice in displacement settings is highlighted by the fact that some of the methods for resolving conflict and related traditional practices may themselves constitute serious violations of individual human rights and raise grave protection concerns. It is therefore important to ensure that in planning SGBV prevention and response programme, access to justice and security support is also taken into consideration.

Case studies

In the Asia-Pacific, there are still many cases of SGBV due to deeply rooted gender inequality as well as discriminatory socio-cultural norms and practices. There are many challenges in addressing SGBV in the region as there is still a high rate of gender inequality and traditional practices that may be harmful. There are harmful traditional practices such as pre-natal sex selection, child marriage, and honor killing. A study by UN Population Fund showed that in the Asia- Pacific, approximately 60 to 80 per cent of all women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence. A World Vision study found that out of 25 countries with high rates of child marriage, majority are affected by conflicts and natural disasters.[9] When a natural disaster or conflict occurs in an area where there is already a high rate of gender inequality and harmful traditional practices, it is almost unavoidable that

there would also be an increase in SGBV.

In Indonesia, there are many different patterns of gender-based violence. There exist many challenges including the government often classifies internal conflict in Indonesia as social conflict, which often occurs in the district and provincial level where there is still a limited access to justice. However, national policies on SGBV are legally not applicable to cases that occur due to social conflict. As international law and norms on SGBV are often viewed in the country as just a form of western intervention, national laws are the preferred legal framework for SGBV.

Impunity for perpetrators unfortunately is often found in many cases. There is a tendency to blame the victim and causes victims to choose staying silent. Documentations have shown that there is a significant increase of domestic violence in natural disaster settings as well as sexual violence in public spaces. Women have also felt that they were excluded from the distribution process of assistance and must bear additional burden such as cooking for other families in camps. Discrimination against internally displaced persons also often occurs where they are experiencing forced eviction, limited access to information, women who are heads of households are not recorded or admitted and have no access to decision-making process. There is unfortunately not enough policy and regulations in place to protect vulnerable communities in Indonesia. However, studies have also shown that there are improvements in the support and assistance mechanisms. In the case of West Timor, research has shown that fifteen years after the conflict ended, women who experienced loss of livelihood and hope have now felt that their life has improved and are at peace, mostly due to the support they receive from Churches, local NGOs, and the community.

In India, research has shown that the best practices on addressing violence against women include improving the economic diameter. The case of the

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8 World Vision. 2005. Research Report: Untying the Knot- Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States. London: World Vision.

sexual violence against a young medical student had led to more cases being exposed and thus contributes to some changes in Indian laws. The Indian prime minister has also launched a Clean India campaign which aims to name and shame those who litter, and a Selfie With Daughter campaign to promote a sense of pride for fathers of their daughters. These campaigns are established as a response to the notion of India being an unsafe environment for women. However, there is still no strong legal framework being put in place to prevent violence against women and children.

Nevertheless, the region also possesses many opportunities, as there are strong networks of women's NGOs, good engagement with the government, and many regional processes and national agendas. Furthermore, the region also has many sources of technical expertise, guidelines, advocacy campaigns, and regional and global network of humanitarian actors.

Discussion

Several countries in the region, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, have already been cited for adopting various national laws and policies on SGBV. However, there are still limitations as to the implementation of these SGBV laws as not all frontline and law enforcement officers are properly educated on such laws. Moreover, violence against women is often associated with human rights issues but in some societies, such as in Indonesia, international conventions and treaties on human rights are viewed as a foreign intervention. Hence, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women (KOMNAS Perempuan) uses the country's constitutional as the main legal framework to combat SGBV.

To correctly address SGBV and discrimination, a change of mindset and perspective are needed as regulations and policies alone cannot change the lives of victims. While governments often sympathize with the problem, the issue is still not considered as a major problem. It needs to be complemented with financial support for capacity building, partnership and coordination at the local level, as well as a blueprint for development design at the district and provinces to help serve the needs of victims in the aftermath of a natural disaster or conflict. Victims should have strong backing from their families for them to be strongly determined to pursue their cases in courts. Nonetheless, the victims should also be empowered so that if they do not get the support of their families, relevant government agencies and NGOs can still support them.

The National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) in ASEAN, in particular, should now be more proactive in preventing SGBV by tapping the assistance of relevant government bodies and even civilian organisations to help them understand and adopt appropriate measures to protect women and children. Furthermore, SGBV should be included in national risk and vulnerability assessments so that pre-disaster preparations and response mechanisms would include the vulnerable sectors.

A link between the development sector and humanitarian sector is also needed and coordinated so as to avoid jeopardizing any existing efforts on the ground. In addition, a study on the effectiveness of protection and assistance efforts as well as data collection can play a significant role in identifying proper development of protection and prevention of GBV.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The final session focused on the discussion on the main issues that were deliberated on the previous sessions. The issues included the major challenges to the humanitarian actors, national and regional frameworks on protecting vulnerable communities and sectors, and one specific protection issue, i.e., sexual and gender-based violence. The session also discussed how the academe can help enhance HADR in the Asia-Pacific.

Information and knowledge sharing

At the previous sessions, many challenges faced by the stakeholders were raised, while good practices, relevant knowledge and field experiences from a diversity of humanitarian actors such as inter-sectoral agencies, intergovernmental bodies, militaries, (I)NGOs and governments were also shared and discussed. In enhancing the humanitarian system, there is no need to re-invent the wheel but come up with innovative ways for some things that might need to be modernized. It is crucial that all actors should be able to have a common situational analysis and this would rely on trust, good analysis and coordination among them.

In this regard, the academic community can contribute to finding innovative ways to modernise the humanitarian system. Research studies can be very important and influential in order to find ways to address challenges to HADR. However, humanitarian actors have emphasized that the academe's research contributions should be practical, can contribute to agenda-setting, and can lead to the necessary policy intervention. Finally, research studies must provide the humanitarian actors and practitioners the tools that they need to better protect and empower vulnerable populations.

Prioritising SGBV

Through contributing to agenda-setting, the academic community's research studies can help humanitarian NGOs further advance SGBV as a critical protection issue given that SGBV remains not a priority for major HADR stakeholders; hence the policy responses and protection measures remain inadequate. Even when Rapid Deployment Units (RDU) are deployed for natural disasters, they are constituted of people representing relief units such as rescues, water and sanitation or health but there is rarely a person appointed for SGBV. There is a need for us to push harder for someone with this kind of a profile as well when such RDUs are deployed. Nonetheless, some stakeholders such as international NGOs have committed to include a dedicated SGBV protection person in their RDUs.

Added to this are structural issues, as well as issues of power and culture in non-conflict situations. With regard to some social taboos, which may impede the holistic response to SGBV in an affected community, humanitarian actors should fully understand the social and cultural settings of the community. It is thus important for them to build stronger partnerships with community-based organisations to dismantle these taboos.

Even regional organisations such as ASEAN may be able to deal with taboos while addressing SGBV. For instance, an ASEAN joint taskforce comprising the social welfare ministries and NDMOs can be formed and tasked to accelerate public awareness, including addressing taboos, in their respective national jurisdictions.

As ASEAN member-states have already adopted regional and national declarations as well as national laws on the general protection of women and children, they may consider expanding the language use in these declarations and laws to cover SGBV. Jointly addressing transnational issues such as trafficking, forced prostitutions, and child labour, among others, that may be related to SGBV can also be served as a comfortable starting point for member-states to address SSGBV. There is an opportunity then, of using existing policies and frameworks and find ways of applying them to different protection issues such as SGBV. Moreover, there is already an opportunity of using existing structures within governments to find ways to dismantle taboos. There might already be working groups and champions within the governments, especially at the local level, who can help in breaking down taboos and removing the stigma. For instance, the Philippine government has put forward a proposal for a study group on the protection of women in conflict. Hopefully, this would compel other member-states to consider such issue.

Engaging faith-based groups

In sharing and promoting good practices, there is a need for regular dialogue among stakeholders that are working on SGBV. Some groups that need to be filled in this process are the private sector and the importance of philanthropic players. There are many humanitarian organisations that want to do good but are not fully aware of the "do no harm" principle. Further engagement with faith-based organisations, are not new players actually, as there is a lot to learn from them. In addition, local research studies that might not be in English but nevertheless is very useful should also be tapped into.

There are still several topics that need more research and where the gaps are felt. The academe, for instance, can further explore the local context of "humanitarianism" in Asian cultural communities as it has been seen as a western concept and help humanitarian workers understand its local context for them to adjust their actions at the community level. Protection can also be implemented in the Asian context of compassion. The concept of protection needs to be set within an Asian mindset of charity and compassion rather than the western notion of humanitarianism. It was explained for instance that the major principles in the international humanitarian law are also present in the Sharia Law.

In the context of general Asian beliefs, more research work still needs to be carried out with regard to SGBV. This can be especially tricky in multicultural societies and there might be the need to also look at patriarchal power systems; while they might not be easy to change, research work on this would help humanitarian stakeholders understand the challenges they face in addressing delicate protection issues at the community level.

Research agenda for the academic community

The session also discussed avenues for the academic community to contribute to the enhancement of the HADR system. They are the following:
-   Undertake case studies that can be developed in conjunction with different humanitarian actors and can also be used by the various set of actors in different settings;
-   Build a set of essential readings for disaster governance actors including a complete teaching curriculum on protection issues such as SGBV;
-   Engage security forces to educate them on handling delicate protection issues;
-   Collect good practices and assess how and where they are working best; and
-   Connect SGBV with other relevant HADR issues to be able to promote SGBV as part of the broader humanitarian agenda.

Programme

Day 1 (Tuesday, 21 July 2015)	
Time	
18:00-19:30	Welcome Dinner [invitation only] Venue: Tien Court, Copthorne King's Hotel, Level 2

Day 2 (Wednesday, 22 July 2015)	
Time	**Session**
08.30-09.00	Arrival of Participants and Registration
09.00 – 09.30	Welcome Remarks **Assoc. Prof. Mely Caballero-Anthony** - Head, Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
09.30 – 11.00	**Overview Session: From humanitarian sector review to specific protection challenges** **Moderator:** Assoc. Prof. Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore. **Speaker 1:** Jeremy England, Head of Regional Delegation (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia **Speaker 2:** Benjamin William, Secretary General, Singapore Red Cross
11.00-11.15	Tea Break

Session 1 - Humanitarian support in natural disaster settings

Themes:
- What are the common challenges to coordination among key humanitarian actors? What has been done to address these?
- What are the challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief? What blockages are there to the effective roll out of relief?
- What are the underlying causes / patters of inefficiency?

Moderator: Dr Jonathan Lassa, Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore

11.15 – 12.00	**Speaker 1:** Martin Faller, Head of Operations, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Asia Pacific
	Speaker 2: Brig. Gen. Desmond Tan, Director of Joint Operations, Singapore Armed Forces
	Speaker 3: Dr Caroline Brassard, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, Singapore
	Speaker 4: Dr Raman Letchumanan, Senior Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.
12.00– 12.45	Discussion
12.45-13.45	Lunch

Session 2 – Humanitarian assistance in conflict settings

Themes:
- Identify different needs and risks
- Management and trust of aid delivery in conflict settings
- Issues of coordination

Moderator: Fiona Barnaby, Legal Officer, ICRC Kuala Lumpur

13.45 – 14.30	**Speaker 1:** Col. Restituto Padilla Jr., Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, Armed Forces of the Philippines.
	Speaker 2: Dr. Maria Guevara, Regional Humanitarian Representative in Asia for *Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)*
	Speaker 3: Professor Shin-wha Lee, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea.
14.30-15.15	Discussion
15.15 – 15.30	Tea Break

Session 3 – Understanding protection of vulnerable communities in natural disaster and conflict settings

Themes:
- Definition of protection – demystifying notions / concepts & actions
- Protection of vulnerable communities – protection against which threats? Susceptibility?
- Community-based approaches
- What are the forms of protection provided by governments, militaries, international /intergovernmental organisations and NGOs?
- What does protection entail in disaster and conflict-hit areas? How do responders understand protection in disaster and conflict settings?
- What are the legal frameworks for the protection of vulnerable communities? How to reduce risks of specific populations?

Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Tan See Seng, Deputy Director and Head of Research of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.

15.30 – 16.15	**Speaker 1:** Simla Ramphul, Regional Adviser for Migration, ICRC Kuala Lumpur
	Speaker 2: David Bloomer, Regional Child Protection Advisor – Asia, Save the Children, Singapore
	Speaker 3: Sarah Teitt, Deputy Director, Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, The University of Queensland, Australia
	Speaker 4: Dr Alistair D. B. Cook, HADR Programme Coordinator and Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.
16.15-17.00	Discussion
18.00-19.30	Dinner

Session 1: Sexual and gender-based violence in natural disaster and conflict settings

Themes:
- What are the common cases of sexual and gender-based violence in disaster and conflict settings?
- Which sectors are most vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence in disaster and conflict settings?
- What are the needs of victims (protection, health, economic, security, legal) and remaining challenges to fulfil them?
- What are the legal frameworks on sexual & gender-based violence in disaster and conflict settings?

Moderator: Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.

08.30 – 09.15	**Speaker 1:** Angelique Sarr, Gender & Sexual Violence Advisor, ICRC Dakar
	Speaker 2: Christina Haneef, Regional Gender and Diversity Officer for Southeast Asia, IFRC
	Speaker 3: Isabel Sequeira, Executive Director, Asia-Pacific Support Collective Timor-Leste (APSC TL), Timor-Leste.
	Discussant: Dr Maria Guevara, Regional Humanitarian Representative in Asia for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).
09.15-10.00	Discussion
10.00-10.30	Tea Break

Session 2: Policy approaches to GBV in humanitarian emergencies

Themes:
• What are the global best practices in responses to gender based violence in disasters and conflict settings?
• How effective are they in reducing GBV and what different is needed for our region?
• What are the blockages to effective protection of vulnerable populations? What is to be done to effectively overcome these?

Moderator: Prof Shin-wha Lee, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

10.30 – 11.15	**Speaker 1:** Devana de la Puente, Inter-agency Regional Emergency GBV Advisor for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Bangkok, Thailand
	Speaker 2: Desti Murdijana, Former Vice Chairperson, National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), Indonesia
	Speaker 3: Nilova Roy Chaudhury, Visiting Senior Fellow, WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace), New Delhi, India.
	Discussant: Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.
11.15-12.00	Discussion

Rapporteur Report and Discussion

12.00 – 12.45	**Moderator:** Jeremy England, Head of Regional Delegation (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei), International Committee of the Red Cross, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia • Rapporteurs to provide 3 – 4 key points of each session. • GBV/SV – from debate to policy – what can be concretely done (Angelique Sarr) • Protection of vulnerable populations in disasters and situations of violence
12.45 – 13.00	Closing Remarks – End of Programme
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14:00 –14:30	**Publication Discussion** **Moderator:** Dr Alistair D. B. Cook, HADR Programme Coordinator and Research Fellow, NTS Centre, RSIS, NTU, Singapore.
14:30 –15:30	**ICRC – RSIS Meeting [Invitation Only]**

LIST OF SPEAKERS, DISCUSSANTS AND MODERATORS*

in alphabetical order according to last names

1. **Ms. Fiona Barnaby**
    Legal Officer
    International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
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    Regional Protection Adviser
    Save the Children, Singapore

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    National University of Singapore, Singapore

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5. **Dr Alistair D.B. Cook**
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6. **Mr Jeremy England**
    Head of Regional Delegation (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei)
    International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
    Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

7. **Mr Martin Faller**
    Head of Operations
    International Federation of Red Cross
    and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Asia Pacific

8. **Dr. Maria Guevara**
    Regional Humanitarian Representative in Asia
    Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

9. **Ms Christina Haneef**
    Regional Gender and Diversity Officer for Southeast Asia
    International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

10. **Dr Jonathan Lassa**
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13. **Ms Desti Murdijana**
    Former Vice Chairperson
    National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan)
    Indonesia

14. **Dr Tamara Nair**
    Research Fellow, NTS Centre
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15. **Col. Restituto Padilla Jr.**
    Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations
    Armed Forces of the Philippines

16. **Ms Devana de la Puente**
    Inter-agency Regional Emergency GBV Advisor for Asia and the Pacific
    United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
    Bangkok, Thailand

17. **Ms Simla Ramphul**
    Regional Adviser for Migration
    International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
    Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

18. **Ms Nilova Roy Chaudhury**
    Visiting Senior Fellow
    WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace)
    New Delhi, India

19. **Ms Angelique Sarr**
    Gender and Sexual Violence Advisor
    International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
    Dakar, Senegal

20. **Ms Isabel Sequeira**
    Executive Director
    Asia-Pacific Support Collective Timor-Leste (APSC TL)
    Timor-Leste

21. **Assoc. Prof. Tan See Seng**
    Deputy Director and Head of Research
    Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies
    S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
    Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

22. **Brig. Gen. Tan Kok Ming, Desmond**
    Director of Joint Operations
    Singapore Armed Forces

23. **Ms Sarah Teitt**
    Deputy Director
    Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
    The University of Queensland, Australia

24. **Mr Benjamin William**
    Secretary-General/CEO
    Singapore Red Cross

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   Centre Manager

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   Associate Research Fellow

About the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

The ICRC responds quickly and efficiently to help people affected by armed conflict. It also respond to disasters in conflict zones, because the effects of a disaster are compounded if a country is already at war. Emergencies are unpredictable, so its rapid deployment capability is hugely important.

Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement which is the largest humanitarian network in the world. The ICRC directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

The mission of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies. It is present in every country and supported by millions of volunteers. The "Movement" is made up of the following components: the International Committee of the Red Cross, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

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

The **RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies** conducts research and produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness and building capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

To fulfil this mission, the Centre aims to:

- Advance the understanding of NTS issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific by highlighting gaps in knowledge and policy, and identifying best practices among state and non-state actors in responding to these challenges.
- Provide a platform for scholars and policymakers within and outside Asia to discuss and analyse NTS issues in the region.
- Network with institutions and organisations worldwide to exchange information, insights and experiences in the area of NTS.

- Engage policymakers on the importance of NTS in guiding political responses to NTS emergencies and develop strategies to mitigate the risks to state and human security.
- Contribute to building the institutional capacity of governments, and regional and international organisations to respond to NTS challenges.

Our Research

The key programmes at the **RSIS Centre for NTS Studies** include:

1. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)
2. Energy Security
3. Food Security
4. Health Security
5. Climate Change, Environmental Resilience and Sustainable Development
6. Peace, Human Security and Development

Our Output

Policy Relevant Publications
The *RSIS Centre for NTS Studies* produces a range of output such as research reports, books, monographs, policy briefs and conference proceedings.

Training
Based in RSIS, which has an excellent record of post-graduate teaching, an international faculty, and an extensive network of policy institutes worldwide, the Centre is well-placed to develop robust research capabilities, conduct training courses and facilitate advanced education on NTS. These are aimed at, but not limited to, academics, analysts, policymakers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Networking and Outreach
The Centre serves as a networking hub for researchers, policy analysts, policymakers, NGOs and media from across Asia and farther afield interested in NTS issues and challenges.

The Centre is the Coordinator of the ASEAN-Canada Research Partnership (2012–2015) supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. It also serves as the Secretariat of the initiative. In 2009, the Centre was chosen by the MacArthur Foundation as a lead institution for its three-year Asia Security Initiative (2009–2012), to develop policy research capacity and recommend policies on the critical security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific.

It is also a founding member and the Secretariat for the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia).

More information on our Centre is available at http://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/nts-centre/

About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, was inaugurated on 1 January 2007 as an autonomous School within Nanyang Technological University (NTU), upgraded from its previous incarnation as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), which was established in 1996.

The School exists to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of Asia-Pacific security studies and international affairs. Its three core functions are research, graduate teaching and networking activities in the Asia-Pacific region. It produces cutting-edge security related research in Asia-Pacific Security, Conflict and Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Area Studies.

The School's activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific and their implications for Singapore.

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