



Photo by Choi Kwangmo via Wikimedia Commons

We are pleased to bring you the seventh issue of Beyond Relief!

In our **Feature Article**, Dr Lina Gong discusses the need to update policies and guidelines related to the military's role in disaster response in order to improve civil-military engagement in the humanitarian context.

This issue's **On the Ground** features some of the relief and fundraising efforts that Singaporean humanitarian organisations - Singapore Red Cross, World Vision - have undertaken as part of their response to humanitarian crises such as Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. It also features initiatives and projects our members have been part of over the year.

Our members from the academic community have also been keeping themselves busy. This issue includes several reports and journal articles, covering a diverse range of topics including displacement, climate security and post-disaster activities.

In the Spotlight features upcoming events and opportunities for collaboration including the 8th Singapore Humanitarian Conference by the Singapore Red Cross and the upcoming RSIS-RHCC Humanitarian Futures Forum.

Finally, we welcome your ideas, feedback and input and look forward to supporting joint efforts in research, networking and knowledge sharing. Do get in touch with either Nanthini (isnanthini@ntu.edu.sg) or Al (iscook@ntu.edu.sg).



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TIME FOR CHANGE: INVEST IN A CIVILIAN-MILITARY FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN DISASTERS AT HOME AND ABROAD

By **Lina Gong**

Research Fellow, Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, RSIS, NTU, Singapore



Photo by EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid via Flickr

Civil-military engagement is essential in responses to major humanitarian emergencies. In Asia and the Pacific, natural hazard is the more common scenario that involves humanitarian civil-military interactions, due to the region's high exposure to geological or meteorological events as well as relative peace and stability. However, there is an increasing need for civil-military relations in this region to adapt to other scenarios, as threats such as climate change and public health emergency are becoming more pronounced.

After major natural hazards such as large-scale earthquakes, tsunamis, and tropical storms, national militaries, and sometimes foreign militaries, are requested to support a civilian-led response, due to their strong capacities in logistics, coordination, and information management as well as high levels of readiness and risk tolerance. In the past few years, militaries have deployed to respond to disasters other than geological or meteorological events, such as fighting [bushfires](#) and supporting, or even leading, [COVID-19 response](#).

While such deployments are not unprecedented, they have become more frequent and common. This trend has raised a few questions with regard to humanitarian civil-military engagement. The first question is where the boundary is of military involvement in disasters. Given the changing risk environment, governments should re-

evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and risk tolerance of government agencies, militaries and humanitarian organisations in new scenarios and update the delineation of roles and responsibilities, wherever necessary. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities is a foundation of effective coordination.

The importance of coordination in humanitarian response has long been recognised and countries have made efforts to improve coordination in disasters. However, there are still questions regarding the changing risk environment and how this adds complexity in humanitarian civil-military coordination. The expansion of military involvement means that militaries need to engage more with more civilian actors. In addition to traditional partners such as disaster management authorities, disaster relief NGOs and logistic companies, recent disasters, especially COVID-19, have highlighted the need for militaries to engage health and migration humanitarian organisations. Interactions between military and government agencies are facilitated by a national coordination mechanism. But high rates of staff turnover can increase difficulty in coordination at the working level. Therefore, permanent positions for civil-military relations in key government agencies should be considered.

Compared with government agencies, military engagement with NGOs faces additional challenges as NGOs uphold the

humanitarian principles and so many have minimal experience working with militaries. Regular engagement activities such as study events and joint exercises can provide opportunities for both sides to develop a better understanding of each other's organisational structures, working culture, as well as roles and responsibilities in disaster response.

In principle, militaries assume only a supportive role in disaster response within countries. Yet, in reality, COVID-19 responses in some countries were [led by national militaries](#), such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The political and coercive nature of military leads to the concern that the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian missions can be compromised in military-led disaster response. This is particularly problematic when the national military is a party to a pre-existing internal conflicts still exist in some parts, such as Mindanao in the Philippines, Southern Thailand and Myanmar.

Militaries are also increasingly deployed overseas to support other countries' responses to climate-induced disasters and public health emergencies. Civil-military engagement in this context is coordinated either by the government of the affected country or the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Regional cooperation in humanitarian civil-military coordination has made remarkable progress in Asia and the Pacific. Regional

guidelines and cooperative mechanisms have been developed to support civil-military interactions, exemplified by the “Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines For The Use Of Foreign Military Assets In Natural Disaster Response Operations” (APC MADRO) and the [Regional Consultative Group \(RCG\) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific](#). Again, such progress been oriented towards natural hazards, and the need is apparent to incorporate other scenarios in regional cooperation on humanitarian civil-military engagement. For instance, the region should consider updating the APC-MADRO to reflect the risk landscape now and in the future.

From the perspective of assisting countries, they need to re-evaluate their plans for the protection of the safety and security of military personnel in the new risk environment when deploying their militaries to assist a foreign disaster response. Three US servicemen died in a plane crash when fighting the bushfire in 2020 in Australia. During COVID-19, military personnel deployed overseas faced the risk of infection. Sufficient information is essential for the assisting country to develop a military protection plan, which needs effective communication with the military and civilian agencies of the affected country and humanitarian organisations.

The evolving regional risk environment is changing the context of humanitarian civil-military engagement, as government agencies, militaries and humanitarian organisations will have to work together in more challenging and complex scenarios, such as concurrence of two or more disasters. Building on existing frameworks which prioritise natural hazards, Asia-Pacific countries and partners should update policies and guidelines related to military role in disaster response and civil-military engagement in humanitarian contexts, as well as build new partnerships .

Further Reading

Alistair D. B Cook and Sangeetha Yogendran, “Conceptualising Humanitarian Civil-Military Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific: (Re-)ordering Cooperation”, *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, 17 February 2022, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/conceptualising-humanitarian-civil-military-partnerships-in-the-asia-pacific-re-ordering-cooperation/>

Fawzia Gibson-Fall, “Military Responses to COVID-19, Emerging Trends in Global Civil-Military Engagements”, *Review of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2021): 155–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210521000048>.

Rob Grace, “Surmounting Contemporary Challenges to Humanitarian-Military Relations”, *Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies*. 2020, <https://watson.brown.edu/chrhs/files/chrhs/imce/research/Surmounting%20>

[Contemporary%20Challenges%20to%20Humanitarian-Military%20Relations_Grace.pdf](#)

Vincenzo Bollettino and Lea Ivy Manzanero, “Climate Change and Civil-Military Coordination in the Philippines: How climate change disasters will impact aid delivery in areas affected by conflict.” *Climate, Disaster and Development Journal* 5, no.1 (2022): 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.18783/cddj.v005.i01.a02>

ON THE GROUND

Singapore Red Cross Sends Humanitarian Aid to Support Affected Communities after Cyclone Mocha

In response to the devastation caused by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar, the Singapore Red Cross (SRC) pledged S\$50,000 in humanitarian aid to support the immediate relief efforts by Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) on 16 May. SRC’s contribution will go towards ongoing and future humanitarian response. SRC has also launched a public fundraising appeal for recovery operations in Myanmar.

“We are deeply concerned by the destruction in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha. Initial assessments suggest the damage is extensive and needs will be high amongst the already vulnerable communities, including displaced persons in Rakhine. We can only get a better assessment of the disaster’s full magnitude when telecommunications is restored. The Singapore Red Cross responders are on standby to be deployed to provide further relief assistance, as we continue to work closely with MRCS to support its humanitarian



Photo by Singapore Red Cross (SRC)

response,” said Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General and CEO of Singapore Red Cross. There are many urgent humanitarian needs and MRCS has been preparing for a major emergency response to aid communities affected by Cyclone Mocha’s path. It has activated its Emergency Operations Centre at the central, state and regional levels. More than 700 MRCS’ volunteers were mobilised to respond and provide assistance to the communities in the affected areas.

MRCS provided the affected households with essential items like food, drinking water, and other emergency relief items. It has also assisted in the mass evacuation of over 1.2 million individuals. SRC remains in close contact with MRCS to monitor the situation.

Cyclone Mocha, a Category 5 cyclone, made landfall along the coast of Rakhine, Myanmar on the afternoon of 14 May. It is the largest storm to hit the Bay of Bengal in over a decade, with wind speeds as strong as 250 kilometres

per hour. It has resulted in extensive damage to infrastructure, including roofs and power lines in the Rakhine state. The identified impact areas are particularly vulnerable because they are low-lying and thus highly susceptible to storm surges, floodings, and landslides. Humanitarian needs are further aggravated by the continuing crisis

in Myanmar that has displaced hundreds of thousands of individuals. Approximately 43.5 percent of the Rakhine population is living below the poverty line, thus exposing this population to significant livelihood disruption. To exacerbate this, over 71 percent of the housing in Rakhine is largely made of bamboo and there is very poor

access to improved sanitation facilities, making this population highly vulnerable. Major obstructions to communications have rendered precise and timely damage assessments of the area challenging.

Contributed by Singapore Red Cross

Emergency Aid and Recovery for Children and Families Affected by Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka



Pre-school children receiving a midday meal as part of World Vision's response to food insecurity in Sri Lanka. Photo by World Vision International (Singapore)

In 2022, Sri Lanka faced its worst economic crisis since independence. A currency devaluation following a 70% drop in foreign exchange reserves resulted in a severe shortage of essential items such as fuel, food, and medicine. Headline inflation soared. The economic crisis threw the country into widespread public protests and political instability. Sri Lanka's most vulnerable children had already been struggling with securing three meals a day, but agricultural disruptions and the high cost of food plunged many of them into starvation. Extreme climate events and the fallout of COVID-19 compounded the country's predicament.

World Vision launched an emergency appeal to provide life-saving interventions to the most vulnerable families with children, and continued to extend support through the latter stages of this protracted crisis in the first half of 2023. World Vision's relief response prioritised the need to address food insecurity, maternal and child malnutrition, psychosocial and child protection vulnerabilities, and economic insecurity. With the support of local and international donors, World Vision has been able to help more than 1.3 million individuals in 46 locations across the country. This includes the provision of relief items such as food aid (dry rations, nutrition packs for pregnant and lactating women, nutritional rehabilitation for malnourished children, and midday meals for preschool children and school children), hygiene kits (dignity packs for adolescent girls), and cash-for-work, coupled with livelihood resilience training, to bolster income generation.

As the response operation has transitioned from emergency relief to the recovery phase, World Vision is continuing to work with the most vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka to achieve long-term improvements to their living conditions. This includes helping food-insecure households to diversify their livelihood options, and equipping them with climate-smart agricultural practices and nutritional gardening practices to improve their resilience to economic and climate shocks.

Executive Course for Evaluation Leaders

IUNICEF is a strong advocate for evaluating impacts of humanitarian programs and has recently put significant resources into building capacity to that effect. Dr Caroline Brassard and Dr Marina Kaneti are among the faculty teaching for the Executive Course for Evaluation Leaders (ExCEL), a partnership between UNICEF and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. This course brings together directors, deputy and assistant directors from key ministries, analysts and civil society organisations to strengthen the function of evaluation in the public sector, with a focus on child-related programs. This

two week intensive course aims not only to provide technical skills to evaluate the impact of children-centred programs but also to foster an overall culture of evaluation for governments and partners across the world. For each cohort, this innovative face-to-face course brings together participants from a dozen countries to encourage knowledge sharing and networking.

Please find more details [here](#).

UN Initiative on Early Warning for All

As a Research Board member of the World Meteorological Organisation, Dr Caroline

Youth For Change Conference 2022: Peace Talks

On 17–18 December 2022, students and young adults from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam came together for the seventh edition of World Vision Singapore's annual Youth For Change Conference (YFCC), hosted at Republic Polytechnic. The theme of the conference was "Peace Talks", and was prompted by the recognition that many children worldwide had been affected by conflict in 2022, with crises in countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Ukraine drawing the most international attention.

For more details, [click here](#).



Photo by World Vision International (Singapore)

Contributed by World Vision International (Singapore)

Brassard is focusing on strengthening evidence-based decision making for developing countries and the linkages between science and services. In the context of the five year UN initiative on Early Warning for All (EW4All), initiated in 2023, she assists the research board through designing mechanisms to encourage developing countries to adopt innovations and improve evidence-based decision-making to avoid future systemic risks due to hazards, exposure, and vulnerability, and capitalise on scientific knowledge, enabling governance structures and individual and community resilience.

Please find more details [here](#).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

News Articles, Commentaries and Reports

Invisible and Forgotten: Displaced Children Hungrier and at More Risk than Ever

World Vision International
June 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Multilateralism and Disaster Management in the Global South: A Case Study for the G20

Sohini Bose and S. Nanthini
Policy Brief
6 June 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Mitigate, Adapt, Prepare: A Climate Security Agenda for the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting

Alistair Cook and S. Nanthini
RSIS Policy Report
19 June 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Humanitarian Futures in Southeast Asia

Lina Gong
RSIS Policy Report
26 June 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Issues, Trends and Developments in Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in the Asia-Pacific

Lina Gong and Alistair D. B. Cook
RSIS Commentary
11 August 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Journal Articles / Chapters

In the Skies Over Sofia: Place (s) in Displacement for Syrian Women in Bulgaria

Ann-Christin Zuntz and Marina Kaneti
Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies, 10 (01), 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.

Inversion and forward estimation with process-based models: An investigation into cost functions, uncertainty-based weights and model-data fusion

Maricar Rabonza, Michele Nguyen, Sebastien Biass, Susanna Jenkins, Benoit Taisne and David Lallemand
Environmental Modelling & Software, 167:105750, 2023

Click [here](#) to read more

Social capital and community integration in post-disaster relocation settlements after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Indonesia

Patrick Daly, Saiful Mahdi, Ibnu Mundir, Jamie McCaughey, Cut Sherly Amalia, Raudhatul Jannah and Benjamin Horton
International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 95(2):103861, 2023

Remarriage strategies for post-disaster widows and widowers following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia

Saiful Mahdi, Patrick Daly, Ida Fitriya, Ibnu Mundzir, Dian Rubianty, Eka Srimulyani, Jamie W. McCaughey
Progress in Disaster Science, 19:100289, 2023

Click [here](#) to read more.



Photo by ADMM.ASEAN.org

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

2nd RSIS-RHCC Humanitarian Futures Forum

Date: Friday, 3rd November 2023

Time: 08:30 - 17:00

Venue: The Pan Pacific, Singapore

Please find more details [here](#).

Participate in the Response to Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar

1) Make an online donation - [Giving.sg](#) or [Donation Portal](#)

2) Fundraise for SRC

[Register](#) as a third party fundraiser and email us the completed form.

Or

Set up an online fundraising campaign on [Giving.sg](#).

3) PayNow

Go to "PayNow" > Click "PayNow to UEN" > Key in "S86CC0370EGEN" > Key in the amount you would like to donate > Input "Myanmar Cyclone" under Bill Reference.

Donations to overseas efforts are not tax-deductible.

In the event that donations exceed the expenses incurred by Singapore Red Cross in this specific disaster response, any surplus or unspent money, after three years from the date of inception of the fund, can be used to prepare for and serve communities affected by other disasters or may be used to complement or to sustain projects undertaken by SRC in helping the vulnerable in areas affected by disasters.

Appeal period: 16 May to 31 August 2023



Photo by EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid via Flickr