



ONE **ASEAN**  
ONE **RESPONSE**

# ASEAN - ERAT



4

The AHA Centre  
Knowledge Series Book #4

**ASEAN-ERAT: Solidarity in Action**

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This book describes the history and evolution of the ASEAN-ERAT system with accompanying stories from the team members' real-life experiences on the ground.

The AHA Centre Knowledge Series

Book #4

**ASEAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND ASSESSMENT TEAM (ASEAN-ERAT)**  
Solidarity in Action

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ASEAN  
EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE AND  
ASSESSMENT  
TEAM  
(ASEAN-ERAT)

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

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## **H.E. WILLEM RAMPANGILEI**

Chief of BNPB  
National Disaster Management Authority of Indonesia

## **FOREWORD**

### **From the Chair of ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management and AADMER Conference of the Parties, 2016**



This year Indonesia has been honoured to chair the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM), the AADMER Conference of the Parties (COP), the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and the Governing Board of the AHA Centre. Sitting in these roles during 2016 has allowed Indonesia to witness the hard work and achievements reached by the AHA Centre throughout the last five years, and we are honoured to be part of the ongoing efforts undertaken in coordinating disaster management across the ASEAN region.

Indonesia has stood beside the AHA Centre since its establishment, and throughout the last five years has acted as the Host Country to facilitate the ongoing establishment and expansion of all AHA Centre's work. We are proud to have supported the AHA Centre through such processes, and have found great value in overseeing the movement. The Centre's role as the coordinating body for disaster management within the ASEAN region has become increasingly relevant and clear as we constantly face the increasing threat of disaster that affects our communities, our infrastructure and our social fabric as a whole.

We recognise the key roles played by National Disaster Management Offices of all ASEAN Member States, and highly value their engagement, support and input across all that we have undertaken throughout the last five years. We also extend our appreciation and thanks to all of our ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other partners who have supported and added value to the progress of our work, and hope that such support continues as we progress in the coming years.

2016 has also seen the important step of the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response signed in September by all ASEAN Leaders. This vision, and its universal support, creates the strongest of platforms for the advancement of emergency management within ASEAN into the future. Indonesia is proud to have been a supporting member of the advancement of this vision, and looks forward to working with all parties towards the vision's realisation.

We offer congratulations to the AHA Centre in all its work undertaken as captured by the AHA Centre Knowledge Series books. We also wish continued success for the future to come as we continue towards a coordinated and prepared ASEAN region in the face of disaster.



**MR. SAID FAISAL**

Executive Director  
ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian  
Assistance on disaster management

**FOREWORD**

**From the Executive Director  
of the AHA Centre**



The first five years of the AHA Centre has been full of achievements, challenges, surprises and overall hard work by our dedicated team, stakeholders and supporters. Through the books of the AHA Centre Knowledge Series, we take a moment and a step back to witness the impact that the AHA Centre has had since its formation in 2011, to appreciate the achievements, to recognise the challenges and lessons, and to move forward as a united ASEAN region in the midst of the turbulence and instability that disaster can create.

Across the last five years, the AHA Centre and the overall solidarity of the ASEAN region has been tested time and again by disaster, and has grown stronger and more unified than before. Whether responding to large-scale destruction, developing world-class programmes, or implementing and promoting regional mechanisms to solidify the ASEAN emergency management sector, the AHA Centre has relentlessly strived to achieve its overall goals. However, we appreciate these achievements always with vision towards the future, understanding and preparing for the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead.

The recent ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response by the leaders of our region's nations forms the next key building block for continuing the expansion and unification of our work within the ASEAN region. With this substantial declaration, the AHA Centre received not only full support for the work we have undertaken over the previous five years, but importantly regional confidence and trust for the AHA Centre to continue in the role of coordinating ASEAN's futures in the face of disaster. This confidence placed in our work provides even more passion and drive to reach new heights, and ensures the AHA Centre is fully resourced and prepared for what lies in wait.

It must be recognised that the outcomes realised since the AHA Centre's establishment in 2011 could not have been achieved without the support of many, primarily from the ASEAN Member States and their National Disaster Management Offices. Their ongoing willingness to engage, support, and work with the AHA Centre has been the key factor in the development of our working areas. The support from the ASEAN Secretariat has also been highly valued. Our Dialogue Partners and partners have provided valuable ongoing support across the scope of our work. Finally, we recognise the leadership

and support provided by the ASEAN Member States through the AMMDM, AADMER COP, ACDM and Governing Board over the last five years and also show great appreciation to Indonesia as the host country for the AHA Centre’s operations since formation.

With this book, we remember all those who have been affected by disaster, we learn the lessons to strengthen and improve our readiness in the future, and we duly appreciate the achievements and efforts of the AHA Centre and all its supporters. While predicting the future of disaster impact on the region is a near-impossible action, our region’s ability to prepare and respond as one single movement is a vision that gives us great confidence and hope for the future of a united and engaged ASEAN in the face of disaster.

**ABOUT  
SOUTHEAST  
ASIA**

**NATURAL** disaster presents itself in a range of shapes and sizes, with little warning as to when and where it will strike. As the world advances its preparation and prediction mechanisms to better mitigate losses due to natural disaster, the full magnitude of disaster impact remains relatively unknown, dependant on elements such as population size, density and location.

Southeast Asia forms a dynamic region, home to more than 600 million people, with its population and geography making it one of the largest regions in the world. It covers an area of approximately four million square kilometres, with its geographical position leaving it prone to a range of typhoons, earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters on a yearly basis. Southeast Asia has been home to some of the most violent natural disasters in recent history, with their intensity and impact resulting in great loss of lives and extensive damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. The Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 stands as the most significant recent example of a large-scale disaster within Southeast Asia, causing the deaths of more than 230,000 people, and impacting 14 countries in and outside the Southeast Asian region.



# ABOUT ASEAN

**THE ASSOCIATION** of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

**The aims and purposes of ASEAN are:**

- To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations;
- To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter;
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields;
- To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres;
- To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilisation of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples;
- To promote Southeast Asian studies; and
- To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.

The ASEAN Secretariat was set up in February 1976 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN. The ASEAN Secretariat’s basic function is to provide for greater efficiency in the coordination of ASEAN organs and for more effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

## ABOUT AADMER

**THE ASEAN** Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally binding framework for regional cooperation and coordination in all aspects of disaster management. AADMER was signed by the 10 ASEAN Foreign Affairs Ministers on 26 July 2005 and entered into force on 24 December 2009.

The Agreement guides the development of operational procedures to respond collectively and promptly to disasters. For example, it includes provisions to facilitate the movement of relief items and to expedite customs. It also defines the utilisation of military and civilian personnel in disaster relief operations. The Agreement mandates the creation of a centre to coordinate regional disaster response (the AHA Centre).

**ABOUT THE  
ACDM &  
GOVERNING  
BOARD OF  
THE AHA  
CENTRE**

**THE ASEAN** Committee for Disaster Management (ACDM) serves as the main subsidiary body that oversees the operational implementation of AADMER under the Conference of Parties. Its main roles include:

- To provide leadership and guidance towards fulfilling the goals and objectives of AADMER, according to the vision of disaster-resilient nations and safer communities within ASEAN by 2015;
- To initiate, direct and oversee the development, monitoring and implementation of the AADMER Work Programme and other initiatives implemented by the respective working groups;
- To strengthen coordination with relevant ASEAN bodies;
- To collaborate with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, multilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector.

The ACDM is headed by a Chair, supported by a Vice Chair, and consists of the heads of national agencies responsible for disaster management of ASEAN Member States. The ACDM meets at least once a year.

The ACDM also serves as the Governing Board for the AHA Centre, which assumes the overall responsibility and is accountable and for the operations of the AHA Centre. The AHA Centre reports to and serves as the Secretariat of the Governing Board.

## ABOUT THE AHA CENTRE

**FOLLOWING** the entry into effect of AADMER, between 2009 and 2011 ASEAN Leaders vigorously promoted the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (the AHA Centre).

The AHA Centre was formally established during the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bali on 17 November 2011, through the signing of the 'ASEAN Agreement on the Establishment of the AHA Centre' by ASEAN Foreign Ministers and witnessed by the respective Heads of State/Government.

The AHA Centre was established to facilitate cooperation and coordination both internally among ASEAN Member States and externally with the United Nations and international organisations for disaster management and emergency response.

The AHA Centre's primary functions are to facilitate regional cooperation for disaster management, to facilitate joint emergency preparedness and response, and to operationalise regional coordination mechanisms for emergency preparedness and response.

When a major disaster strikes the region, the AHA Centre plays a central role in facilitating the flow of information. It follows precise communication and coordination protocols as defined by the Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP).

During emergency response, the AHA Centre can also help mobilise ASEAN's standby assets and personnel. The AHA Centre has the capacity to send relief items and deploy the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT). The AHA Centre also organises simulation exercises on a regular basis to test regional emergency response mechanisms.

## 1

# SYMBOL OF ASEAN SOLIDARITY





*Image on left page: The Secretary-General of ASEAN, the AHA Centre and ASEAN-ERAT members meet the response teams from Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and the Philippines during Typhoon Haiyan emergency response*

“

*“The ASEAN-ERAT is the symbol of our collective response in the region.”*

**- Dam Hoa (Viet Nam), ERAT**

The devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck in December 2004 was a catalyst that would in a matter of months seal a regional agreement that outlined the mechanisms for collectively responding to catastrophic natural events within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed by the 10 Member States in 2005, becoming the world’s first legally binding regional instrument for mutual aid during disasters and emergencies.

AADMER provides for the conduct of joint assessments as necessary to enable the affected country and its assisting neighbour Member States to determine the scope of assistance required.

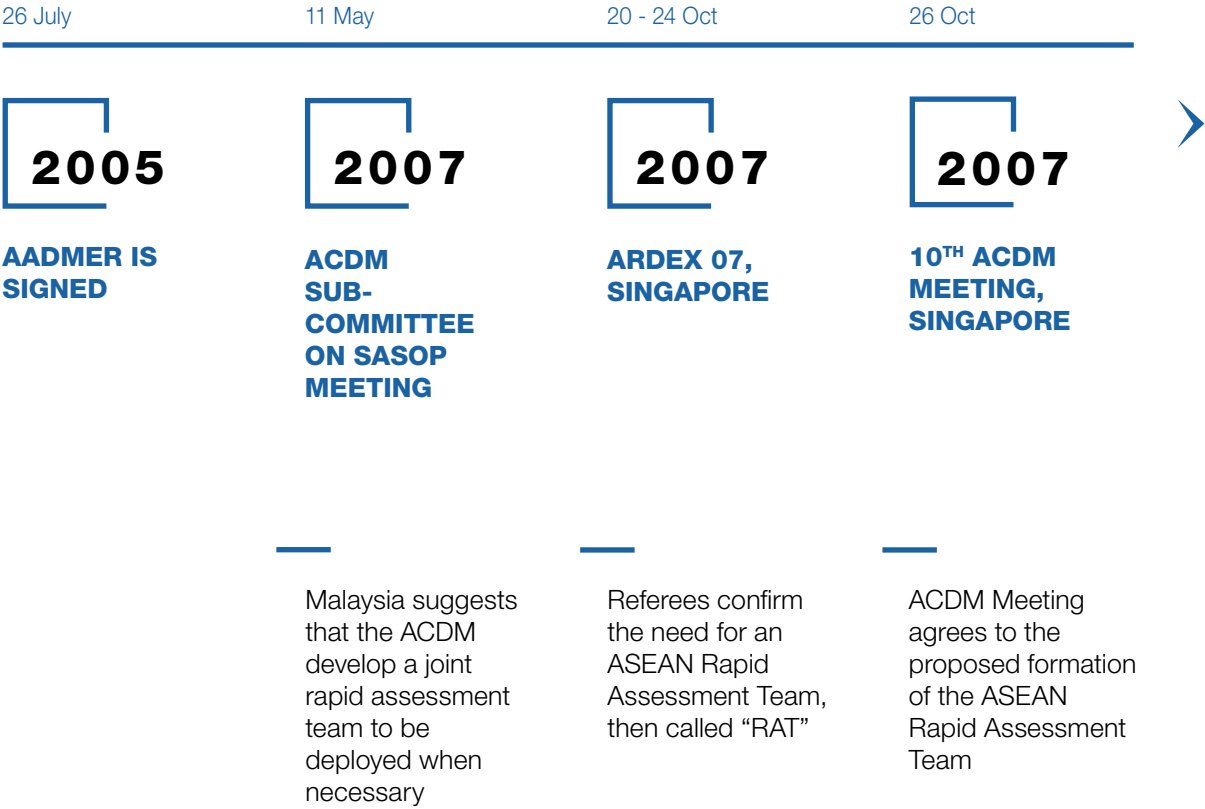
In 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar’s Ayeyarwady Delta, resulting more than 140,000 people were killed or unaccounted for. Back then, ASEAN’s systems for coordinated response were still being developed. The ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT), conceptualised few months back in October 2007, provided an opportunity to bridge the impasse of access between international assistance and affected communities in Myanmar. The recommendations of the first-ever ASEAN-ERAT deployment “proved to be the turning point for the establishment of an ASEAN-led coordinating mechanism” in responding to the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis.

ERAT’s history goes several months back, even years, before Cyclone Nargis. When AADMER was signed, Member States already recognised the need for a joint assessment, where both the assisting country and affected Member State mutually “consult on the scope and types of assistance required” for disaster relief and emergency response. A similar agreement, the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution signed in 2002, provided for the conduct of joint assessments. These assessments later took the form of a multi-country assessment team, inspired by the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), which offered an appropriate model for the region’s culture and diverse political and economic context.

The idea of an ASEAN rapid assessment team was raised in meetings of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) when AADMER was being operationalised through the development of the ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP).

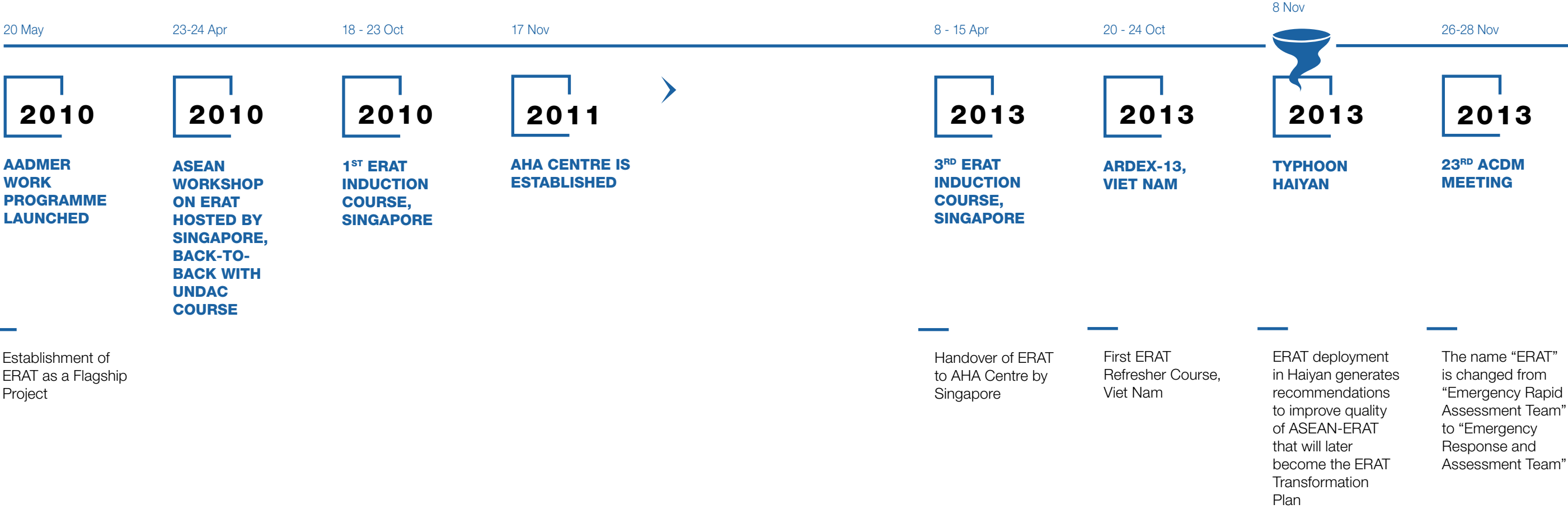
In October 2007, Singapore hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX). During this exercise, SASOP was tested. Immediately following the exercise, the After-Action Review revealed that an ASEAN rapid assessment team was necessary, but should avoid duplication with similar rapid assessment structures, such as the UNDAC. Hence, Malaysia recommended the formation of an ASEAN rapid assessment team during the 10<sup>th</sup> ACDM Meeting held in Singapore on 26 October 2007 immediately after ARDEX-07. Acting on this recommendation, the 10<sup>th</sup> ACDM Meeting agreed to form a regional rapid assessment team, marking the birth of an important symbol of regional solidarity that would later come to be called the ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT). This decision was also firmed up in the succeeding meeting, the 11<sup>th</sup> ACDM Meeting, held in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, on 17–18 March 2008, where the ACDM endorsed SASOP, which included a section on “Joint Assessment of Required Assistance”.

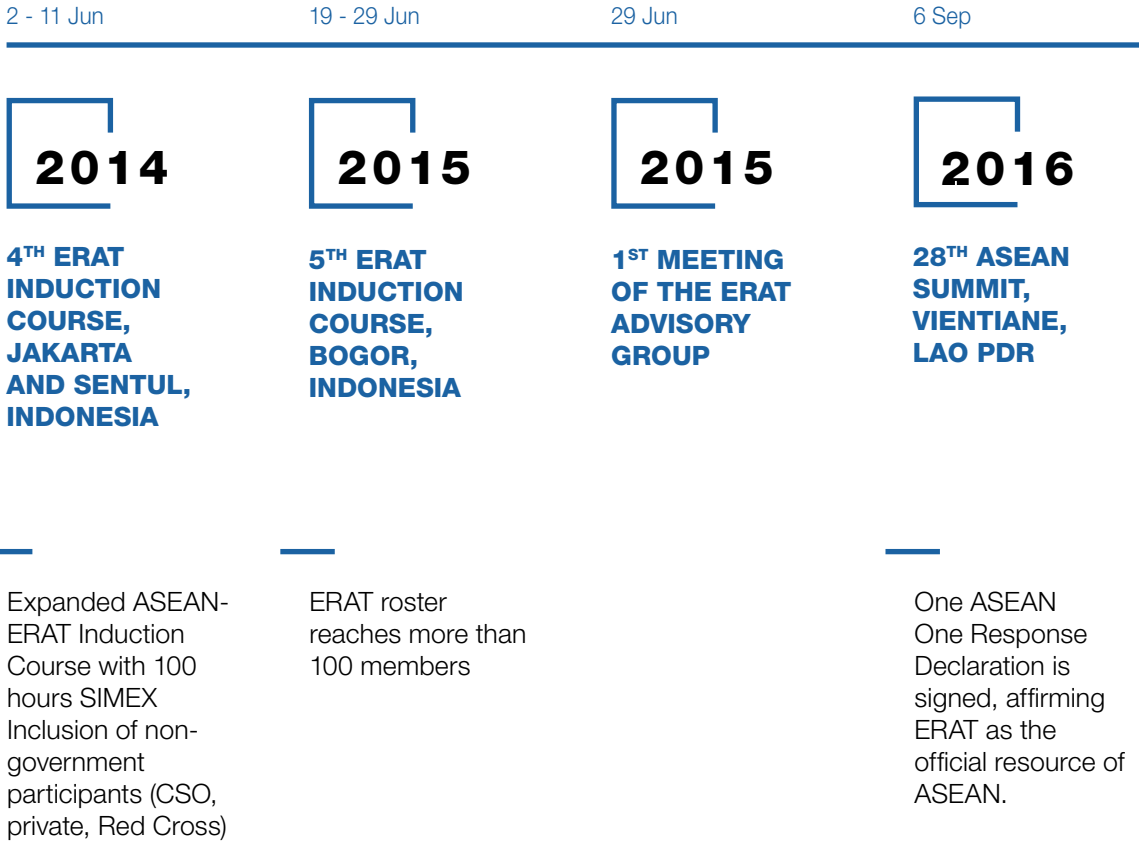
MILESTONES IN ERAT HISTORY











“I remember vividly,” Adelina Kamal, now Deputy Executive Director of the AHA Centre, recalled. “The creation of ERAT was suggested by the referees of ARDEX-07. It was also Dr. Rajan Gengaje from UNOCHA who served as one of our referees in ARDEX that reinforced the idea. He spelt out the basis for an ASEAN rapid assessment team, because, there will be times that UNDAC will not be available to respond to ASEAN, or not be able to respond to disasters in ASEAN.”

As if by premonition, the situation unfolded as predicted. “Then Cyclone Nargis happened in May 2008,” recalls Kamal. “We were in Bangkok that was our staging area. We were coordinating with the UNDAC team there. Meanwhile, my former boss, the late Dr. Anish Kumar Roy, and I were trying to call the ACDM members to deploy the rapid assessment team. The ACDM already endorsed the idea of ERAT, but we hadn’t gone to its operationalisation because the AHA Centre was not there yet.”

“Even the other assessment teams were not allowed to go in at the time. Ow Yong and Winston were supposed to be deployed to Myanmar, but they couldn’t get in. Winston at the time was seconded by Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Ow Yong was being deployed by SCDF as UNDAC. The ones who could go in were Agnes Palacio (the Philippines) and Dr. Jemilah Mahmood (Malaysia), because they were using their own government or diplomatic passport.”

“And Myanmar said, they could only invite ASEAN to come in. It was seen as an opportunity, and there was a need for us to see what was actually happening. We said, ‘Okay, let’s do this. Let’s just deploy and let’s take lessons from that.’”

“It would have been a different story for Nargis, if ERAT wasn’t there,” Kamal said.

Now in its tenth year, ERAT has been deployed to small- and large-scale disasters throughout the region. The formation of the regional rapid assessment team enabled ASEAN, particularly, the ACDM and the AHA Centre, to deploy teams that were capable of providing needs assessments and supporting the affected Member State in areas it had requested.

Where several similar rapid assessment teams exist in the region alone, ERAT is unique in many ways. First, it enjoys a strong sense of ownership by the 10 Member States. When ERAT is deployed, it becomes embedded with national emergency operations and is treated by the affected country as part of its own response system. Second, it is able to flexibly address the needs of ASEAN. The affected Member State can direct ERAT to address specific needs for support, whether in assessing needs, in logistics and emergency telecommunications, or supporting on-the-ground operations, for example. Through ERAT, the assisting Member States and the AHA Centre, also benefit from manoeuvrability and agility in disaster response, despite the most politically difficult conditions.

THE MAIDEN DEPLOYMENT:  
CYCLONE NARGIS

Cyclone Nargis was perhaps the single most important event, prior to the establishment of the AHA Centre, in shaping the ERAT system.

“It was a unique moment in time,” recalls Winston Chang, a pioneer UNDAC-ERAT member sent to conduct assessments after Cyclone Nargis hit.

“At that time, Myanmar was not like now — now there’s Starbucks. The global response community was held at the global staging point, Bangkok, which was the most accessible airport. Everybody was going to the embassy, trying to get visas. We were stuck there for a couple of days. Even Ow Yong and myself, we were infamously turned back at the airport, even with our UN passports. Although we flew from Bangkok into Yangon, we had to turn back. They said, ‘Sorry.’ They made sure the plane waited for us. But later, through the ASEAN channel, they said, ‘Okay, a team of ERAT can come in.’”

The members of the first ERAT team to deploy were all citizens of ASEAN Member States and were hand-picked from the UNDAC roster. Adelina Kamal of the ASEAN Secretariat served as Team Leader, and UNDAC members Dr. Jemilah Mahmood (Malaysia), Winston Chang (Singapore), Ow Yong Tuck Wah (Singapore), along with other members of the ERAT team from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines, formed ERAT’s pioneer team.

Immediately after the team’s deployment, Singapore, as the Chair of ASEAN, hosted the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting where Adelina recalled ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan read the entire report. Kamal said, “Everybody knew at the time that we were in Myanmar, including the foreign ministers. Dr. Surin was actually instrumental in getting access to Myanmar. All foreign ministers were waiting. Everybody knew that there would be a report coming. The world was actually watching.”



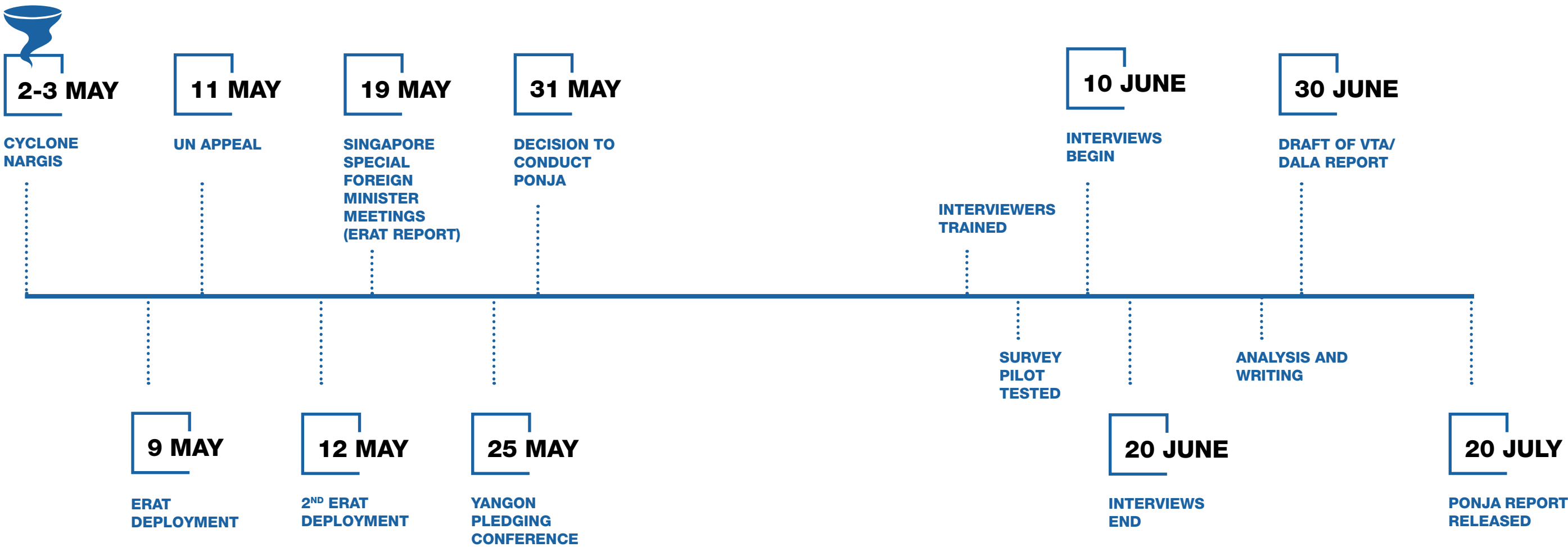
Image on left page: The first ASEAN-ERAT members during the first ASEAN-ERAT mission to Cyclone Nargis response in 2008

The team focused on preparing its report to sufficiently convey the seriousness of the situation and ensure that resources could be mobilised to provide relief to affected communities as soon as possible. Chang said “This situation needed the strength of the [humanitarian] system, having ASEAN members like Jemilah, who played a key role in drafting the report, and those working with the international community, who were willing to put on their ASEAN hat. It’s not only looking at the interest of organisation we are working for, but as a member of ASEAN, we want to contribute. We looked at it through the lens of ASEAN. That’s how the report came about. That’s the strength of being both UNDAC and ERAT. We adapt and are flexible.” The report was first shared with UNDAC and UN OCHA Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) colleagues in Yangon, before it was presented to Dr. Surin in Singapore.

“Dr. Surin shared the report with the foreign ministers, and he actually read the report,” Kamal said. During the press conference of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, one of the reporters asked for a copy of the report. The recommendations and highlights of the report appeared in the Singaporean newspaper.

The ERAT assessment methodology and report were captured in the series of ASEAN publications on the Cyclone Nargis recovery process in 2008. However, the heart of the ERAT story revolves around how an operational mechanism can be a means to address challenges of a political nature. Kamal summed this up, saying, “The political decision that established the ASEAN-led mechanism needed to be backed up by technical findings. At the time, we knew Myanmar needed to open up. The technical findings led Dr. Surin to propose three recommendations to the meeting.” From these three recommendations, Myanmar agreed to allow international assistance to flow to the survivors of Cyclone Nargis, through the ASEAN-led coordinating mechanism called the Tripartite Core Group (TCG), led by the Government of Myanmar and supported by ASEAN and the United Nations.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS FOR THE  
ASEAN-ERAT TO PONJA







THE ERAT IDENTITY

Image on left page: With clear identification, the ASEAN-ERAT member conducts interview with the community to understand the urgent needs

When ERAT was first conceptualised, it was called the “Rapid Assessment Team”, which was abbreviated to the rather unattractive acronym “RAT”. During preparations for the response to Cyclone Nargis, the acronym “ERAT” was settled upon as a more appropriate option, because its meaning in Bahasa Indonesia evokes the collective meaning of being close, tight, and strong.

Establishing the ERAT team while responding to a major disaster created a number of obvious challenges, which were overcome with flexibility and determination. An ad hoc induction training programme was created, and in lieu of official uniforms, the team were given t-shirts from the ASEAN gift shop as a stopgap measure. As Ow Yong remembers, “We needed a sort of ASEAN logo so people would know who we were on the missions. The most obvious was a shirt. Later, we realised we could not go to more formal occasions without a collar, so we did something about it.” Now, ERAT members don red collared shirts and caps, and vests that carry the ASEAN emblem.

ACDM meetings after the response to Typhoon Haiyan agreed that ERAT members and others deployed on the ground should use the ASEAN emblem and the flag of their Member State side by side, to show unity and establish an identity for the regional response.

ERAT’s current roster contains 155 members, drawn from National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs) and other government authorities responsible for disaster management, as well as from civil society, private sector, and academia. Despite this broad range of backgrounds and nationalities, when deployed to respond to disasters, team members come together as ERAT and bear the identity as ASEAN, representing regional solidarity on the ground.

Most importantly, ERAT represents regional solidarity. The Executive Director of the AHA Centre, Said Faisal, noted ERAT’s symbolic value was a core part of its identity. He said ERAT was designed to not only deliver important operational support, but to also represent ASEAN solidarity and togetherness in the face of disaster. As such, it served to not only deliver technical assistance, but a feeling of emotional closeness and support among members of the ASEAN family.

“It is not only operational,” Faisal said. “ERAT must always have a feeling of ‘we’, and therefore it bears an emotional element as well. So, when we deploy ERAT, we don’t just deploy a person or a group of individuals. We deploy the solidarity of ASEAN. It is about delivering results and adding value framed within ASEAN solidarity. The emotional dimension is reflected in the fact that when we deploy ERAT, we are visiting family.”

**ERAT UNDER THE AHA CENTRE**

In 2010, the ACDM adopted the AADMER Work Programme as the operational strategy for realising AADMER. The establishment of a fully-functional Emergency Rapid Assessment Team was one of the flagship projects outlined in the work programme. The full operationalisation of ERAT was prioritised in recognition of the need to strengthen ASEAN’s preparedness and capacity to respond to disasters, and to ensure the rapid and collective deployment of ASEAN assistance following a major disaster in one or more countries in the region. Singapore took on a leading role within the Working Group on Preparedness and Response, providing support for the development of the guidelines for the deployment of ERAT and for the first series of ASEAN-ERAT induction courses.

After the AHA Centre’s establishment in late 2011, Singapore handed over responsibility for the management of ERAT, including the conduct of induction courses, to AHA Centre during the 3rd ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course in April 2013. Afterwards, the AHA Centre, with the assistance of the AADMER Partnership Group (APG) and UN OCHA, conducted the 1st ASEAN-ERAT Refresher Course for graduates of the first two induction courses. Conducted in parallel to ARDEX-13 in October 2013 and hosted by Viet Nam, the refresher course aimed to update the former cohorts on new developments in the regional coordination mechanisms and processes that had been put in place since the establishment of the AHA Centre.

On 8 November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the central islands of the Philippines, leaving no standing structure in its path untouched, from Leyte, Samar, Cebu, Panay island, and Palawan, before moving further west to Viet Nam. The devastation in the Philippines took more than 6,000 lives and caused USD 142 million in economic losses. Barely two years old, the AHA Centre was unable to maximise upon ERAT’s capabilities, having sent a very small team to respond to such a large-scale and widely-spread disaster. Jointly, what ASEAN took away from the incipient collective response to large-scale disasters was the reaffirmation of the ERAT’s critical role as the operational backbone of ASEAN’s collective response on the ground. One ERAT member was already in Tacloban a day before the typhoon made landfall, which proved to be critical to the restoration of communications between the Philippines’ Regional Office of Civil Defence and the central office in Manila. Within 48 hours of landfall, a four-member ERAT team had arrived in Tacloban.

With a total of 78 ERAT member out of 155 deployed at various intervals throughout the regional response, ERAT facilitated the procurement, delivery, reception, and handover of ASEAN relief assistance to the Government of the Philippines in relief hubs in Cebu, Tacloban, Guiuan, and Manila.

ERAT’s main function during the Typhoon Haiyan response was supporting the disaster-affected country and facilitating the handover of relief assistance from assisting Member States to authorities in the relief hubs. This prompted the ACDM to affirm ERAT’s mandate beyond assessing disaster impacts. During the 23rd ACDM Meeting in Da Nang, Viet Nam, the committee agreed to change ERAT’s name from the “Emergency Rapid Assessment Team” to “Emergency Response and Assessment Team” to more accurately capture the nature of its operations, which included rapid disaster assessments, and supporting emergency response operations of the affected country.

The AHA Centre crafted the ERAT Transformation Plan in 2014, to advance the capacities of ERAT in connection with efforts to strengthen the entire collective regional response mechanism embodied in the “One ASEAN, One Response” strategy.

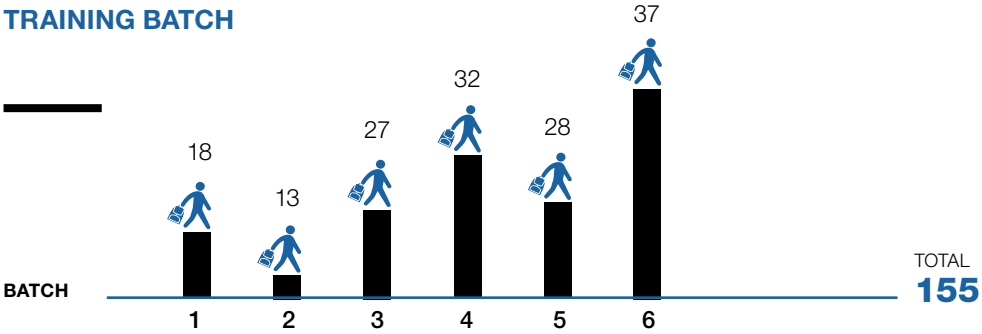


ASEAN-ERAT Members Composition

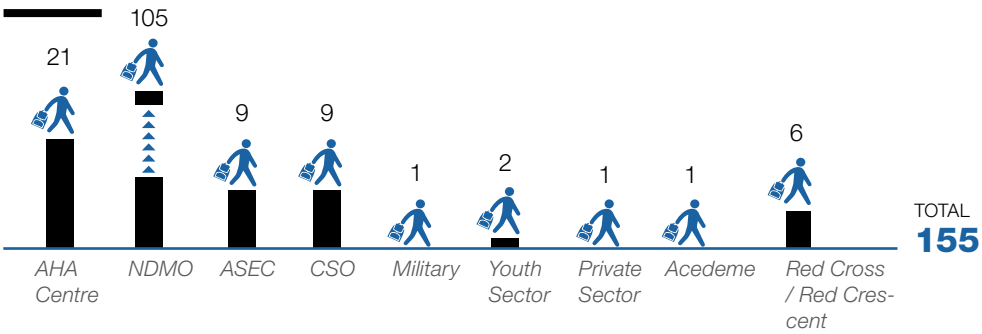
as per 30 November 2016

Image on left page: After receiving the ERAT management from Singapore, the AHA Centre conducts the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Refresher Course, in parallel with ASEAN-ERAT full participation in ARDEX 2013 Viet Nam

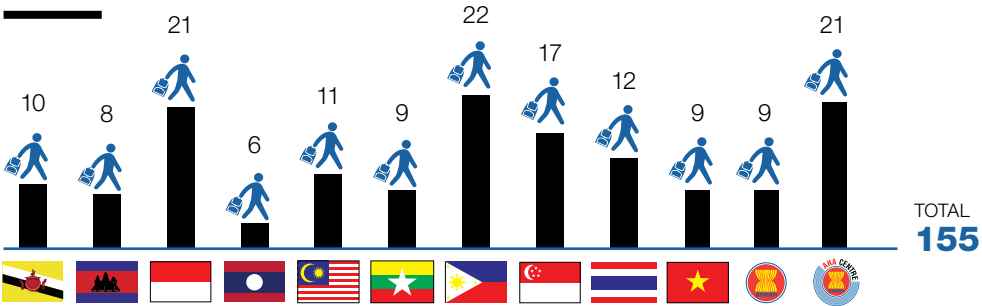
COMPOSITION BY TRAINING BATCH



COMPOSITION BY INSTITUTION



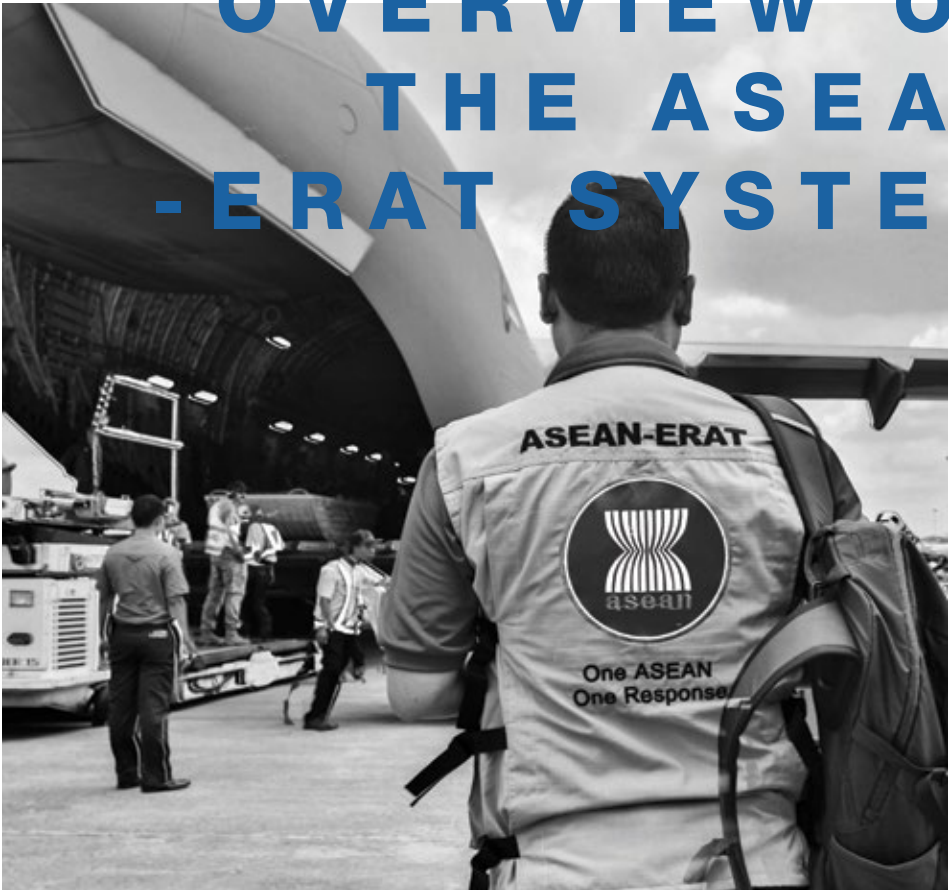
COMPOSITION BY DUTY STATION





# 2

## OVERVIEW OF THE ASEAN- ERAT SYSTEM



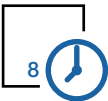


*“The first eyes and ears on the ground — that will be the ERAT team.”*

*– Winston Chang, ERAT pioneer and UNDAC member*

ERAT is collectively owned by the 10 ASEAN Member States. It is designed to respond quickly in providing support to disaster-affected countries in ASEAN in the immediate aftermath of major, sudden on-set disasters or human-made emergencies.

At its core, the ERAT system is able to be deployed within 48 hours, and:



**Be mobilised within eight hours and for a maximum of 14 days**



**Provide the first report gathered from the ground within 72 hours**



**Support the NDMO in disaster assessments and estimation of scale, severity and impact, and needs following a disaster**



**Provide operational support to the NDMO upon its request (such as information management, setting up emergency communication systems, etc.)**



**Coordinate with AHA Centre for the deployment mobilisation of regional assets, disaster relief goods, and personnel**



**Be mobilised for preparedness missions to assist in the NDMO in contingency planning, response preparedness, planning and conduct of regional and national disaster simulation exercises, and support for integration of ERAT in national response systems**

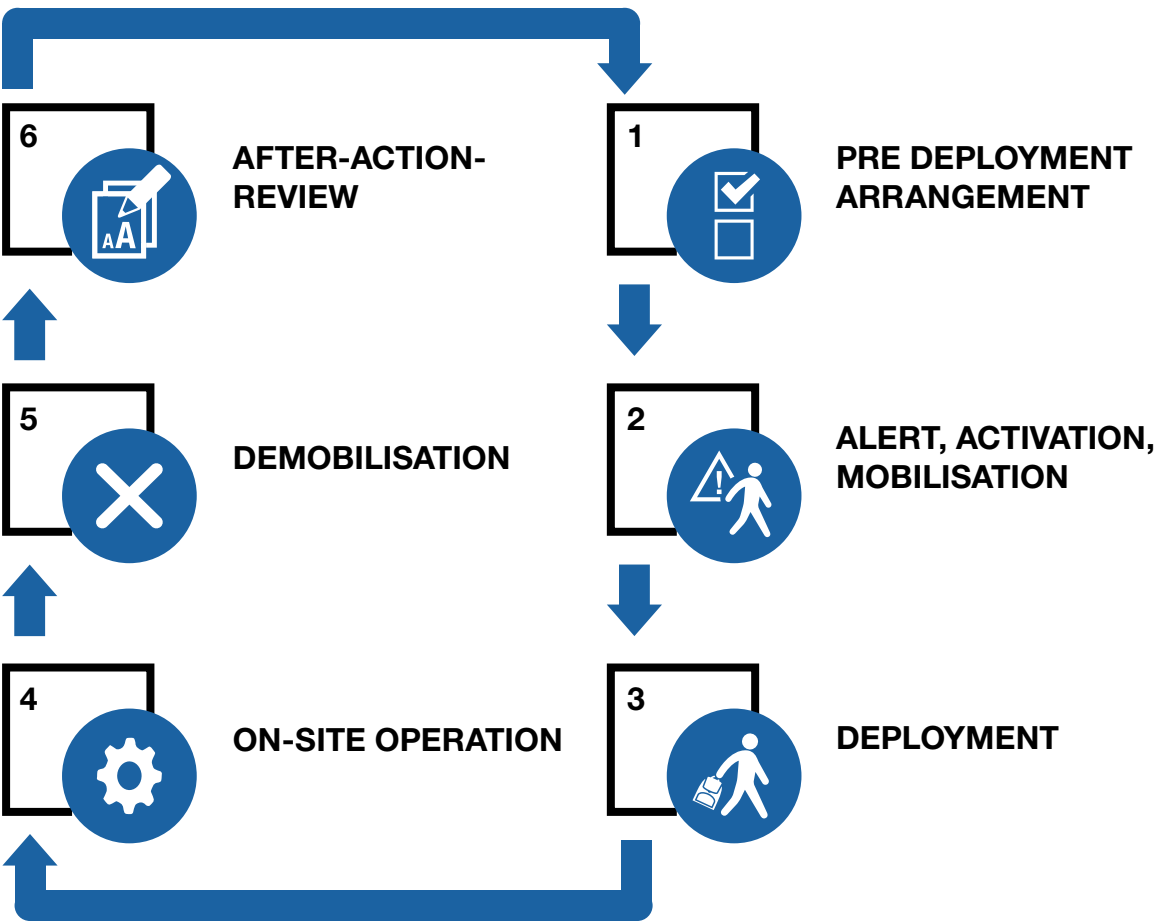
Mohammad Shazwan of Brunei, who has been present in many of ERAT’s milestone events, summarised the team’s work by saying, “ERAT is there, upon request by the affected country, to do fast assessment of damage due to disasters. ERAT plays a major role in making fast, reliable, first-hand reports of the situation, because we are basically in the field.”

Winston Chang emphasised, “The strength with this mechanism is, you are ahead of the curve. In two hours, you are within the disaster area. So, you can respond very quickly. And that, I believe, is the strength of the ERAT system.”

The ERAT system, managed by the AHA Centre, is built upon four pillars: personnel, training, deployment procedures, and equipment. An ERAT mission cycle begins with personal preparedness and pre-deployment arrangements with Member States and partners. Following an alert, as well as a request or offer of assistance, ERAT may be activated and mobilised to the affected country. The deployment process is facilitated by the AHA Centre. On the ground, on-site operations may consist of rapid assessments, information management, and coordination activities. ERAT may provide other services upon the request of the affected Member State. ERAT is demobilised when a mission is completed or if another team is activated to continue the on-site operations. Every ERAT deployment rotation follows the same mission cycle, although they may have different mission objectives, in line with emerging needs. Lessons from each response are gathered and documented through an After-Action Review (AAR).

The ERAT system is linked to several other ASEAN response mechanisms — specifically, the Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS), the SASOP, the Disaster Emergency Logistics System of ASEAN (DELSA), the ARDEX, and the Joint Coordinating Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA). This is why it is also important that all AHA Centre staff go through the ERAT induction courses so they are able to provide support, whether from the Jakarta-based Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) or in the field.

ERAT MISSION CYCLE



ALERT

When the Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS) indicates a hazard could potentially cause a disaster (such as typhoon), or when a disaster is reported (e.g., floods, earthquakes), the AHA Centre sends an alert notification to all ERAT members through short messaging system (SMS), phone call, and email. The alert notification may be for information purposes only, apprising members that a disaster is being monitored or has already happened. The alert notification may also query ERAT members to see who is available for deployment.

Before the alert system was automated, ERAT was activated through phone calls to the National Disaster Management Organisations. ERAT member Shazwan recalled receiving one such phone call in November 2013.

“I received a phone call from my superior and I thought maybe he accidentally dialled me. It was around 3 p.m. So, when I picked up the phone, he said, ‘Shazwan, do you know what’s happening in the Philippines?’ And I said, ‘Yes, Sir. I have a bit of knowledge about it.’ And he said, ‘Okay, tomorrow you will be going. Prepare yourself.’”

Luqman Hakim of the Indonesia’s National Disaster Management Authority was the Team Leader for the Myanmar flood response in 2015. He had the benefit of being updated using the automated alert system. He said, “During that time I was notified through email and a phone call from the AHA Centre. I think they have very good system in terms of information dissemination to alert and notify all ERAT members.”

The AHA Centre regularly tests its alert procedures, to ensure the roster’s connectivity, readiness and responsiveness.



PERSONAL  
PREPAREDNESS

A key element of the ERAT system is personal preparedness. This includes having a bag packed with clothes and equipment, ready to go on short notice. Every ERAT member must be ready to bring along necessary documents for deployment (valid passport, visa, ERAT identification card), medicines and immunisation records, as well as personal items, gear, and gadgets necessary for mobility and communications in adverse conditions. The SASOP, ERAT Guidelines, situation reports and maps are also standard documents in every ERAT mission.

ERAT members also need to have credit cards or emergency cash ready as well. Ow Yong recalled, “In the early days in Myanmar, there were no credit cards, either you had to have USD or local currency. It was a challenge if you didn’t have cash on hand – to book a taxi or transportation. On the second trip, we didn’t know how long it would be, so we were careful about spending money. We shared rooms to save costs.”

Starting with the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course in 2015, ERAT distributed a kit for its members, consisting of a backpack, water purifier, raincoat, and other basic personal equipment needed for the mission.

Personal preparedness is more than having a bag ready to go. It also means that the families of ERAT members also understand that their loved ones may be deployed for weeks on very short notice.

EQUIPMENT

ERAT mission equipment consists of office and photographic equipment (computers, printers, cameras with geo-tagging function, drone) for the mobile office; voice communication equipment (mobile and satellite phone) for emergency communications; data communication equipment (a Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN)) for internet connectivity; navigation devices (handheld GPS); and miscellaneous equipment, such as for powering and charging these devices. ERAT equipment is always benchmarked

Image on left page: The AHA Centre Emergency Telecommunication Kits are effective in establishing communications right after disaster strikes

against recent developments in information and communications technologies in order to support an efficient and effective response.

Hakim noted this equipment was one of ERAT’s key advantages. He said, “We managed to utilise the equipment in the affected areas. It was the first time we used BGAN. Even the community in the affected areas was very excited to see and utilise all that hi-tech equipment.” Hakim added that despite a few minor customs issues, his team even managed to bring in a drone to capture aerial photos to help guide the relief effort.

PRE-DEPLOYMENT  
ARRANGEMENTS

As soon as disaster strikes, the AHA Centre works quickly to coordinate the request for assistance with the NDMO of the affected country, and offers of assistance from the other ASEAN Member States. The AHA Centre also secures clearance from the affected country for the deployment of ERAT members. In the case of typhoons, ERAT is often deployed prior to landfall as part of the region’s readiness to respond. This helps to improve response times, such as in the case of Typhoon Rammasun, which was projected to affect the Philippines and Viet Nam.

The AHA Centre, acting as the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Jakarta, is also responsible for all necessary arrangements to mobilise ERAT and support its on-site operations. The EOC selects the Team Leader among the ERAT members who responded to activation request. When a team has been composed, the AHA Centre is responsible for ERAT members’ travel and accommodation arrangements, and travel insurance. The AHA Centre also arranges for the disbursement of USD 10,000 in mission funding from the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief (ADMER) Fund.

Deployed ERAT members receive an orientation at the meeting point where the team first converges. The EOC provides the team with its mission objectives, mission terms of reference, information about the disaster situation, contact details of the NDMO focal point, and other supporting documents for immigration and customs facilitation.

As the AHA Centre continues to monitor the situation, it may, upon consultation with the National Focal Point (NFP) of the affected country, issue a “stand down” message to activated ERAT members, effectively cancelling the activation and deployment request.

THE ERAT TEAM  
STRUCTURE

The AHA Centre also deploys staff to the field during disasters. In the first few responses between 2013 and 2015, the AHA Centre staff who were deployed for a response mission were automatically and simultaneously activated as ERAT members. To avoid confusion in these dual roles in succeeding deployments, the AHA Centre staff deployed to the field were appointed exclusively as part of the In-Country Coordination Team (ICCT) or as ERAT members.

When an incident occurs, or where there is a need to prepare for a possible emergency, the ICCT deploys to the affected country’s emergency operations centre to begin interfacing on national and regional emergency operations. ERAT reports to the ICCT, which is in turn under the direction of the NDMO of the affected country.

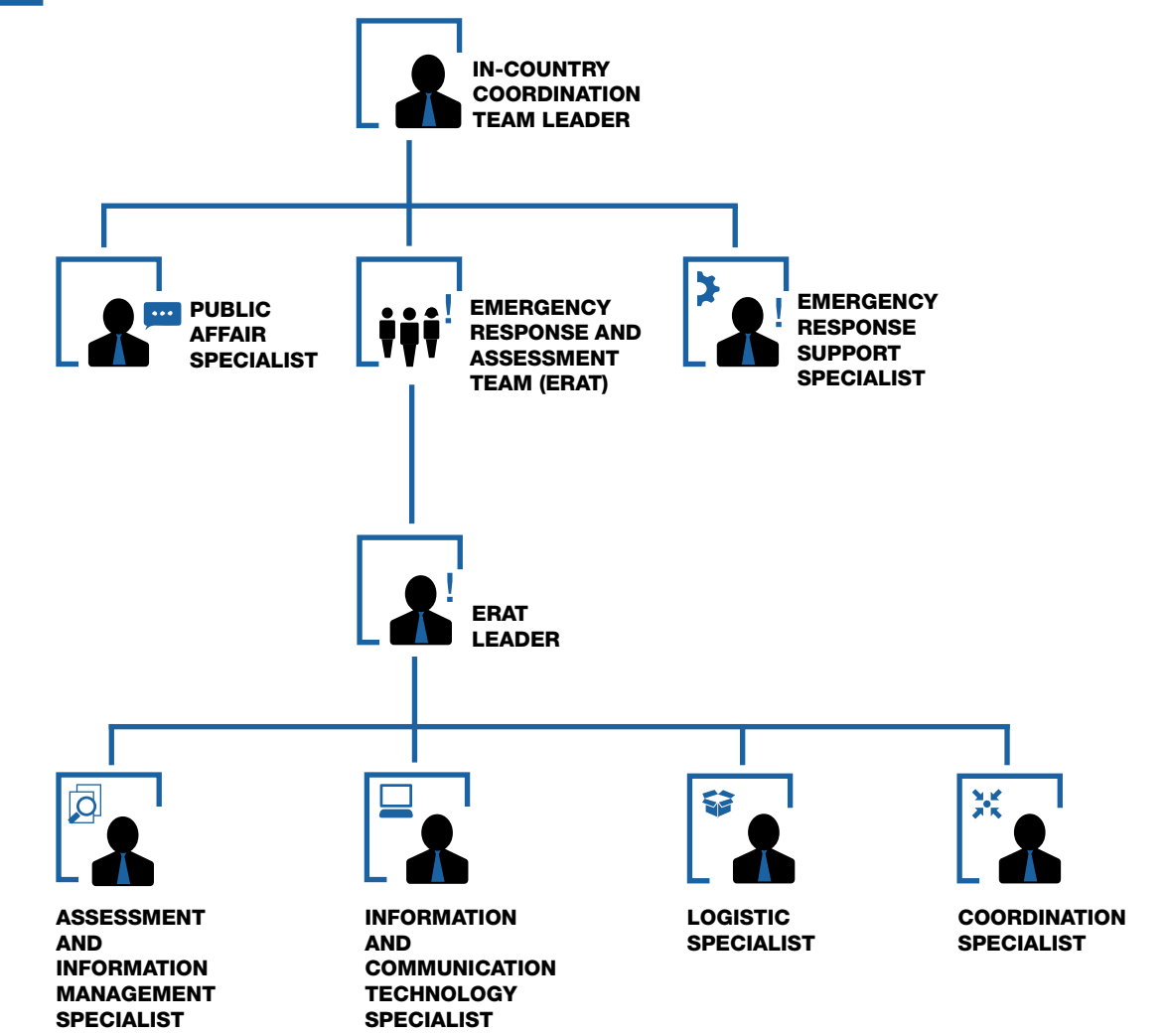
“Coordinating with the government was not a problem for us,” Hakim explains, recollecting the Myanmar flood mission in 2015. “The AHA Centre staff had arrived earlier. They had already established coordination with the government of Myanmar and they provided us with information on the humanitarian situation so we could prepare before we arrived in Myanmar.”

The ICCT consists of a Team Leader, a public affairs specialist, and an emergency response support specialist. The ERAT Team Leader reports to the ICCT Team Leader. In future large-scale responses, the ERAT Team Leader will manage a team of specialists responsible for assessment and information management; emergency communications; logistics; coordination; and other functions as requested by the NDMO of the affected country.

All ERAT members are trained to incorporate needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and culturally marginalised groups. The views of these groups with special needs are gathered using ERAT assessment methodologies, and are addressed through

the types of relief assistance provided by ASEAN. In order to help ensure the concerns of these groups are adequately addressed, every ERAT team aims for a gender-balanced composition, and must include at least one female member.

CHART OF ERAT STRUCTURE



THE FIRST TEAM MEETING

When an ERAT deployment is activated, the AHA Centre selects the Team Leader from among the ERAT members who have responded for deployment. The team meets for the first time at an airport or hotel in the affected country to determine a plan of action based on the objectives of the mission, which are defined in the Terms of Reference for each deployment. Mission objectives may fall within three broad aims to: (a) provide a “snapshot” of the disaster situation, impact, and needs of affected communities; (b) assist the affected Member State, upon request, in the coordination and delivery of relief assistance; and (c) coordinate with the AHA Centre in the mobilisation and reception of regional disaster management assets, capacities, and humanitarian assistance in the disaster-affected areas.

ERAT members or AHA Centre staff on the ground regularly updates the ASEAN Web Emergency Operations Centre (WebEOC) on the plans, itinerary, actions and updates of the response.

Typically, the team gathers each evening to share information collected from the field, to share analysis, discuss recommendations, plan the next steps, and to generally reflect on their experiences, challenges and accomplishments. At the end of the mission, the team also conducts an After-Action Review, which forms part of the end-of-mission report submitted to AHA Centre and the NDMO.

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

The first 12–24 hours upon arrival in the affected country are crucial for ASEAN-ERAT in establishing its credibility and subsequent functioning. After the first team meeting, the team proceeds to a briefing with the National Focal Point (NFP) to discuss ERAT’s mission objectives and Terms of Reference, and to receive instructions and guidance from the NFP.

This meeting is critically important as an opportunity for the ERAT Team Leader to reassure the NFP of its role in supporting the NDMO’s operations to deal with the emergency. The Team Leader leads a presentation of the Field Response Plan — a concise description of the mission objectives, team

The first 12–24 hours upon arrival in the affected country are crucial for ASEAN-ERAT in establishing its credibility and subsequent functioning. After the first team meeting, the team proceeds to a briefing





Image on left page: One of the first tasks of the ASEAN-ERAT within the 24 hours upon arrival is to report to and establish connection with the NDMO as single point of contact for AHA Centre's operations

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This meeting is critically important as an opportunity for the ERAT Team Leader to reassure the NFP of its role in supporting the NDMO's operations to deal with the emergency. The Team Leader leads a presentation of the Field Response Plan — a concise description of the mission objectives, team structure, planned activities, mission support and resources, safety and security, and plan to deal with media — in order to coordinate next steps with the NFP. ERAT presentations typically emphasise the team's self-sufficient nature, in order to reassure the NFP that ERAT will not divert resources from relief operations.

The briefing also provides an opportunity to discuss potential locations for ERAT's base of operations. The most common options include co-locating with the emergency operations of the affected country at the capital or on the ground, or co-locating with the UN On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC).

During the emergency response to Typhoon Haiyan, the team was ill-equipped, lacking in food, water and vital services. Such shortages and the logistical challenges after the devastation seriously hampered ERAT mobility and overall achievement of operations. Gaynor Tanyang recalled the first few days in the Typhoon Haiyan response, when this principle of self-sufficiency was extreme. "I volunteered to find trucking services from Samar because I knew people there and it was a short distance away. But I started to get upset at our team leader because he was asking me to get trucks and kept asking me to call and follow up. But when my contact in Samar would ask to confirm that the trucks were ready to go, Arnel [Capili] would put it aside. And that was because we only had so much cash and Arnel was trying to preserve what we had on hand. But, at that time we needed trucks. We were running around the airport trying to coordinate with the NDMO or the military to give us trucks so that when the items arrived we could transport them to the DSWD or DOH. Yet, we knew that the agencies on the ground needed those trucks, too."

When the second wave of ASEAN-ERAT, mainly AHA Centre personnel, came to Tacloban, they already came with a trailer truck so the team was able to load and unload relief assistance where the government asked them to deliver the items.



Image on left page: Using satellite connection, ASEAN-ERAT member sends rapid assessment report to AHA Centre within maximum of 72 hours after the incident

## THE 72-HOUR REPORT

Getting to the field as quickly as possible is important in order to supply key decision makers with information. ERAT aims to provide the NFP and the AHA Centre with a “snapshot” of the disaster situation within 72 hours of its arrival in the affected country.

The assessment report relies primarily on the official data released by the NDMO. When it is possible for ERAT to gather primary data on-site, it uses the Initial Needs Assessment Checklist (INAC) as a guide. ERAT may also participate in joint or coordinated assessments with other humanitarian actors, upon consultation with the NFP. In addition to primary data, ERAT may also utilise data from secondary sources such as news outlets and other response actors, including the UN, Red Cross, and NGOs.

ERAT submits its assessment to the NFP of the affected country and to the AHA Centre, which then uses it as basis for mobilising regional assets from assisting ASEAN Member States to support the needs of affected communities, or to provide assistance to the NDMO’s response operations.

Recalling his deployment to the Philippines for Typhoon Haiyan, Shazwan said that the team’s first report was sent the same day ERAT arrived in Tacloban. After he completed his mission and went back to Brunei, he immediately gave a briefing to the Brunei National Disaster Management Centre and the minister. Soon after that, the first shipment of assistance was immediately sent by plane and sea vessel.

## SUPPORTING THE NDMO

On the ground, ERAT works closely with the AHA Centre staff in setting up the Joint Operation and Coordinating Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA). ERAT members spend a significant amount of time working with the NDMO, participating in situation briefings, providing assistance as requested, facilitating reception of assistance from other ASEAN Member States, and sharing information gathered on the ground.





Andreane Tampubolon is an ERAT member from the Indonesian Red Cross, who joined the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course in the Philippines. A few months later, she was deployed for two weeks during the Myanmar flood in 2015. “I’d never been to Myanmar before. This was the first time for me to be deployed outside the Red Cross movement. It was the first time for me to coordinate with the NDMO. That was a very good experience. At the mission, we also took part in Myanmar’s EOC reporting to the Relief and Resettlement Department under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The EOC consisted of a lot of stakeholders that were working closely with the NDMO. The Myanmar Red Cross was there, the IFRC was also present, so I met them there, but the main task for me was coordinating with the NDMO.”

**FACILITATING  
RECEPTION OF  
ASEAN ASSISTANCE**

*Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT members go to Hindata District and support the local NDMO during response to Myanmar flooding*

Based on ERAT’s recommendations, goods and equipment from the DELSA warehouse in Subang, Malaysia may be transported to the port of entry closest to the affected site. On the ground, ERAT members coordinate with respective authorities, such as staff of ministries of social welfare, health or the NDMO, for the handover of ASEAN assistance. During Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines in 2012, the NDMO appreciated the mobile storage unit (MSU), pre-fabricated office, and generators provided by ASEAN through AHA Centre as these units helped normalise the response system on the ground.

In most cases, ERAT members hand over relief items to government authorities on the ground. However, the NDMO may request ERAT to assist in the management of the distribution of relief items to the affected communities.

When the Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA) is set up on the ground, ERAT is required to either manage or assist in its operations under the guidance of the AHA Centre. JOCCA operations may include staffing for reception and departure systems for ASEAN assistance in coordination with UNDAC’s Reception and Departure Centre (RDC). As such, an ERAT member may also be assigned to assist directly with UNDAC’s RDC. JOCCA operations may also include, where requested by the affected country, coordination of humanitarian assistance and civil-military coordination.



Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT in ground zero is involved in field coordination with responders from different organisations

## COORDINATING WITH HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

When deployed to a disaster-affected country, ERAT is attached to the NDMO and becomes part of the affected country’s emergency operations. This has led to perceptions in the past of a degree of isolation from other humanitarian actors, including various UN agencies.

In preparing for one major typhoon, Arnel Capili, who currently serves as the AHA Centre’s Director of Operations, recalled that ERAT was the only non-member of the government that was allowed to sit in on a briefing. Rather than signifying an intentional attitude of exclusivity, situations like these reflect the high levels of acceptance and ERAT’s successful integration with national disaster response systems.

“In the beginning, we had a lot of questions about how we work with UNDAC, and how the AHA Centre works with UNOCHA,” Said Faisal, Executive Director of the AHA Centre, said. “Both are working to serve and support the Member States,” he said. “We do not see the ERAT-UNDAC relationship as a zero-sum game. It is not an “either or” relationship. While ERAT is seriously building its capacity through its ASEAN-ERAT Trasformation Plan, becoming more and more prominent in the region, but there might be a case that if we need to have the two responding, then what matters is that they work together. Therefore, the more there are ASEAN-ERAT who are also UNDAC, then it is much easier for inter-operability.”

Oliver Lacey Hall, who heads UNOCHA in Indonesia, has been supporting the AHA Centre in strengthening the regional response mechanisms, including ERAT. He said, “The ASEAN 2025 vision on disaster management is broadly clear. Under Tthe UN’s previous Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, he made it clear that he regarded relationships with regional organisations like ASEAN to be very important. The indications from our new Secretary General are that he shares this view and will want to ensure that regional organisations, like ASEAN, and the UN find now and every more synergistic way of working together.

Hall added, “ERAT proved its political worth in Myanmar ensuring both that core assessment task could be undertaken while also navigating the need for increased humanitarian access. It was a combination of political and operational elements. In Haiyan, the situation was different from a political perspective. After Haiyan we sat and had honest feedback, and concluded by agreeing that there were steps that we needed to take to both support the further development of ERAT capacity while at the same time working to ensure that the ERAT and UNDAC teams are fully interoperable if they are both called upon in future.

“OCHA’s interest in ERAT is to ensure that there is a strong deployable team from the region and for the region. And through that, when we are called upon to deploy together, we don’t have an ERAT team leader and UNDAC team leader who sit separately with the government and says, ‘We’re going to help you.’ We’re going to go to the government together and say, ‘We arrived together, we set up an operations centre together, we’re going to use the same data and information, and we will provide you with the respective services that our individual organisations are mandated to provide you with, but we will do it together.”

ASEAN’s collaboration with other humanitarian actors also yields important relationships and resources for ERAT. Gaynor Tanyang was deployed as an ERAT member in the response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. She said, “We encountered the AADMER Partnership Group [APG] members at different occasions in Tacloban and Cebu. One morning, Dr. Heng Aik Cheng of Mercy Malaysia came to us at the airport, and we facilitated a meeting with the head of the Malaysian medical response team stationed there. Arnel [Capili], our Team Leader, also asked me to organise a meeting with APG members working at ground zero, and we shared what we were doing for the response.”

Deployed during the succeeding wave of the Typhoon Haiyan Response as the Assistant Director of Operations at the AHA Centre, Janggam Adityawarma remembers, “Most APG members who deployed were active and approachable. They were proactively contacting us, providing information.”

Tanyang recalls, “We were able to mobilise two or three volunteers from Cebu. We didn’t know them. We got connected through friends of friends. We asked them to come to Tacloban, self-sufficient, and they somehow arrived and came to work with us.”

## ERAT ADVISORY GROUP

In 2015, the ERAT Advisory Group was set up to periodically advise the AHA Centre in strengthening the ERAT system. It provides advice on the development and implementation of plans for improving ERAT processes and deployments, including the implementation of the ERAT Transformation Plan. Members of the advisory group come from each of the 10 ACDM Focal Points, and are preferably members of ERAT. Other members include representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat and the AHA Centre, which also serves as the secretariat of ASEAN-ERAT Advisory Group.

Responding to the recurrent challenges of quick deployments, ERAT has now institutionalised the quarterly deployment roster, whereby Member States identify ERAT members and secure pre-approval for their deployment. With this system, activating ERAT has become easier because ERAT members are already pre-approved by the NDMO or their supervisors, eliminating the need for further approval processes that can sometimes take days.

Dam Hoa of the Viet Nam Department of Dykes, Flood and Storm Control (DDFSC) said, “I see most — not all, maybe 90 percent — already sent the pre-approval for deployment to the AHA Centre. They assigned the people for each quarter. I see this mechanism working faster, compared with the previous years.”



2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of ASEAN-ERAT Advisory Group, back to back with the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course, in Manila, Philippines on 30 August 2016



# 3



## BUILDING ASEAN CAPACITY: FROM ASSESSMENT TO RESPONSE



*“I brought this principle back to ERAT: Get your job done, no matter what.”*

**- Col. Kadir Maideen (Singapore)**

Being a system owned and managed by ASEAN, ERAT is an inter-governmental mechanism that helps affected and assisting Member States to capture a snapshot of the scale and severity of the disaster, estimate needs, and project the scale of a required response. As an inter-governmental mechanism, the ERAT roster draws from the expertise and personnel of the NDMOs of the 10 countries, and other government authorities responsible for disaster relief and assistance, as called for in AADMER. As such, the ERAT roster is designed to be exclusively composed of citizens of ASEAN Member States, also as the region’s contribution to the global humanitarian architecture. Staff from NGOs, academia, and the private sector from the region add value to the expertise and competencies of the existing ERAT roster. These partners lend their experience in working with affected communities and in mobilising resources for relief assistance in the form of human, financial, material and technological resources.

TRAILBLAZERS

The concept of an ASEAN rapid assessment team was adopted by ASEAN in October 2007 after ARDEX-07 and included into the ASEAN SASOP endorsed in March 2008. When Cyclone Nargis happened, Ow Yong Tuck Wah, a pioneer ERAT member, recalled, “It was the first time we did a rapid assessment. We didn’t have a methodology. We used the release check, which was very stressful. We didn’t have transportation. We had to pay for everything ourselves first. We didn’t have a proper claim system. We did not have a formal established system.”

“There were two plans. One job was to talk to the government to negotiate. Two, in order to do that, you had to know what was happening on the ground but the estimation of needs came from varying sources, that gave very different values,” Ow Yong said.

Adelina Kamal was the Team Leader of the historic ERAT deployment in Myanmar. She recounted the first two ERAT missions leading to the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA), which was conducted under the ASEAN-led tripartite mechanism. “There were several batches of ERAT deployed. The first one came up with the report that led to the recommendation of an ASEAN-led mechanism. Then after that, there was another deployment that included doctors from the Philippines, colleagues from Thailand, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, and Indonesia, among others. The Philippines sent several batches of people who joined PONJA.” ERAT members deployed in this mission were experts in their field, as Kamal had requested for specific skills that included doctors and engineers.



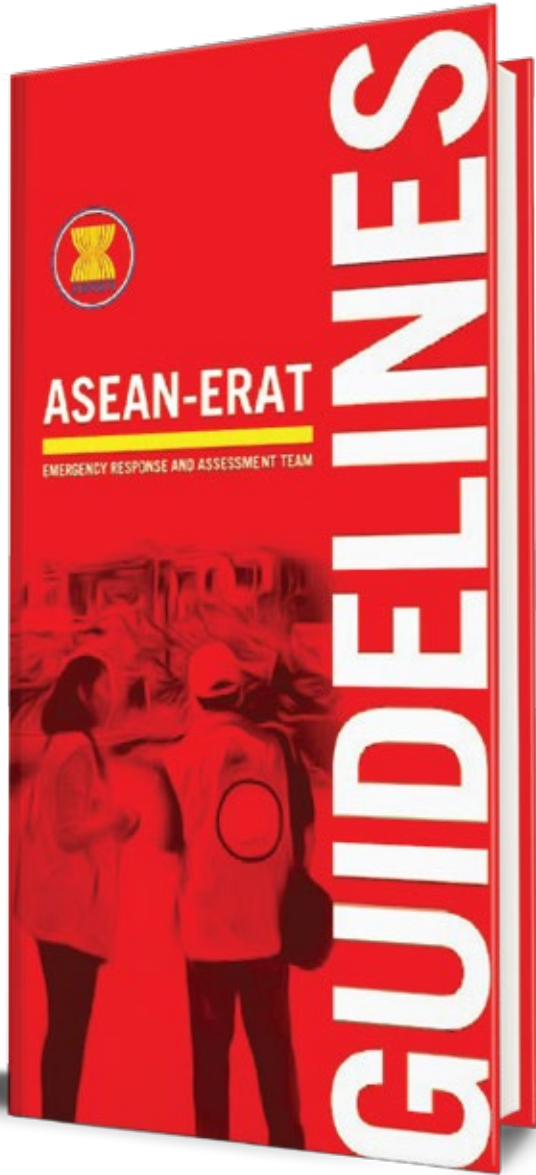
Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT members take a picture after doing assessment in Kyauktan Township, Myanmar 2008

The advance team consisted many of ERAT members. “They were kind of like heroes,” Kamal continued. “They tested the ground. The Village Tract Assessment tools were already developed to assess humanitarian needs like WASH. There was also DALA [Damage and Loss Assessment] of the World Bank, and all of these came under one umbrella, the PONJA.”

“The second assessment was already a larger team that included ERAT under the Tripartite Core Group,” Kamal said, noting that a variety of stakeholders participated in PONJA, including the Myanmar government, UN, Red Cross and civil society — all of whom played significant roles.

“We tested one of the hardest routes for the assessment — what should be the safety measures that should be in place; how we should approach the affected population; how we should utilise the tools. The advance team was mobilised first. After that, they reported and briefed the whole PONJA team that deployed hundreds of people. They gave confidence to the whole team.”

Kamal went on to describe the importance of the advance team’s role. “They inspired the whole PONJA team saying, ‘This is our mission, there are people we need to help. Whatever you would bring, it would be very important in reducing the burden of the affected population.’ This is the message—hope, friendship, and ASEAN brotherhood and sisterhood. That is as important as the assessment itself.”



THE MAKING OF THE ERAT GUIDELINES

The Singapore Civil Defence Force’s (SCDF) Col. Kadir Maideen, seconded to the ASEAN Secretariat and helped in ERAT/ PONJA deployment following the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, was instrumental in the development of ERAT and its guidelines.

He described how ASEAN Member State participants in the UNDAC course hosted by Singapore in 2010 were asked to stay for a few additional days to discuss the development of ASEAN-ERAT and its unique role in the humanitarian landscape. “I had good colleagues from the Bangkok office, Oliver Lacey Hall, Dr. Rajan, and others. They were very supportive of us having a response system,” Col. Maideen said. “They gave everybody the whole architecture of the UN. Then, that’s where we came in, myself, Adelina, to share with them how the ASEAN architecture would fit in.”

ASEAN representatives gathered at the workshop were somewhat sceptical of the lack of handbooks and formal procedures at that time, but Col. Maideen reminded them that ERAT was a work in progress, and that its technical elements would develop over time.

Months later, the first ERAT training, lasting for a full week, was held in October 2010. A handbook had been created, drawing on the wealth of experiences from the Cyclone Nargis operation and adapting many of the UNDAC methodologies to ASEAN context. One example of such contextualisation was to include a list of terminology, such as local terms for village and village heads.

The resulting pocket-sized ASEAN-ERAT Guidelines, which are used extensively in the field, are continuously being improved as succeeding deployments generate lessons-learnt and evolving best practices.

Looking back, Col. Maideen said, “I must say, it’s nine years now down the road, and a lot has been done.”





EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT debriefing with former ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan after the mission to Mentawai earthquake 2010

Just weeks after the conclusion of the first ERAT course in October 2010, an earthquake struck Indonesia’s Mentawai Islands, off the coast of West Sumatra.

Col. Maideen said the situation offered an important opportunity to further strengthen ERAT, while also providing needed support. At the time, he told Kamal of the ASEAN Secretariat, “We had an ERAT training, and we talked about many things that are works-in-progress, and now there is a potential for a response. Let’s just go — go and see what we can do. It may not be the best mission, but at least when I come back from that mission, we can see where we need to enhance the development of ERAT”.

Having convinced Kamal, Col. Maideen quickly gathered a team of freshly trained ERAT members, including individuals from Indonesia and Malaysia, and departed from Singapore in less than two hours.

Once in the Mentawai Islands, the team conducted an assessment despite the absence of formally adopted methodologies. As it gathered data, the team fed it back to the ASEAN Secretariat — not to guide decisions, for deployments, or to ship resources — but to exercise the exchange of information, and learn valuable operational lessons.

As the team finished its mission, it found itself effectively stranded — all of vessels traveling to Padang had already left, and no additional vessels were scheduled to arrive.

“We were in Mentawai and we wanted to return because there was nothing else we could do,” Col. Maideen said. “We were there for two nights. We wanted to return, and we were all in red ASEAN-ERAT T-shirts, which were fresh from the previous course.”

Col. Maideen saw the last Indonesian naval vessel to leave for Padang was preparing to undock. He asked Joyce, the Indonesian member of the team, to approach the naval personnel to see if it would be possible for the team to return to board the ship. The crew replied that they could only assist Joyce, as an Indonesian citizen, but not the foreigners. Joyce passed on the offer from the officer and decided to remain with her team.





Col. Maideen then called Kamal at the ASEAN Secretariat to see if civil-military coordination channels might generate a solution. At that exact moment, Kamal was in a meeting with a military official. Just as the ship was preparing to depart, the team’s clearance came through. The gangway was lowered and the ERAT team was invited on board to return to Padang.

When the team arrived in Padang, it compiled its report on what it had encountered and the problems it had faced, in order to help develop ERAT further. Key findings included the lack of a formal assessment methodology, the reliance on personal mobile phones in lieu of official communication equipment, and the lack of cash advances, which required the team to pay costs during their deployment out-of-pocket and later seek reimbursements.

Upon returning to Jakarta, the team went straight to the ASEAN Secretariat to brief the ASEAN Secretariat, including Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan.

Col. Maideen noted that this experiential learning model has been a cornerstone of the development of ASEAN disaster response systems. “The development of ERAT, the AHA Centre, and SASOP is a mix of taking the best practice, experience, and at the same time, fitting it to our culture here in ASEAN. It’s still evolving, and that’s the beauty of the ASEAN Way. Everybody, every Member State, every stakeholder in the Member States has a viewpoint, and we consider their viewpoints very carefully before we embark on what we are going to do. It has its limitations, and it tends to go slower. But it works — slowly, but surely.”

**HANDOVER TO THE AHA CENTRE**

*Image on left page: The first involvement of the AHA Centre in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-ERAT induction course 2013 in Singapore*

In April 2013, responsibility for the management of ERAT was handed over to the AHA Centre. The official handover event was coordinated to coincide with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course, held in Singapore. All staff of AHA Centre came for the training, except one or two staff who stayed back. AHA Centre brought their computers and disaster monitoring equipment to Singapore and set up a remote office beside the training room.



Image on left page: The 3<sup>rd</sup> deployment of ASEAN-ERAT to Thai flood in 2011

Col. Maideen described the event, saying, “We had participants from the Member States. We stretched it over a Saturday and Sunday. What used to be for R&R (*Rest & Recuperation*) or departure, has now become a day for exercise. At the end of that course, the picture forms much, much better from the previous course. AHA Centre is seeing it. But that was also the last time we hosted the induction course in Singapore. Because we also agreed we cannot be handholding the ASEAN-ERAT for long. AHA Centre needed to move on. It was already set up.

Col. Maideen described his emotional response to the handover. He said, “It was like, you delivered a baby. You fed it for three years. It was now walking. I’m glad it turned out that way. Because they went out to do the fourth course in Indonesia and the fifth course was just completed in the Philippines. And that’s a very fantastic model because, if you had it in the countries, you can bring in more people from the NDMO offices. Then you develop your base. When you do that, getting officials, will know about it. Again, it’s mainstreaming ERAT, mainstreaming AHA Centre.”

One of the success factors in building ERAT capacity is the practice of getting one or two of ERAT members deployed to come to the induction courses to teach or facilitate a module. Arun Pinta comes from the Thailand Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM). He has been a consistent resource person, from his exposure during Nargis in 2008 and the Thai flood in 2011. “In terms of the concept of being an ERAT member, the elements that we received in the training, to me, are adequate. I think many of the elements in the ERAT guidelines used in the training, basically learned from the UNDAC system. So, in terms of the conceptual and academic aspect, no problem, is all there. So, all the participants received this kind of training. However, the actual experience of ERAT participants from the past, we did not learn much about from the people who undertook the mission before you. A lot of things you find your own way to fix, to resolve, and to get things done, without the knowledge passed on to you by previous ERAT members.”

This gap was addressed in the succeeding courses, as Shazwan explained, “From a week’s training, to a full 10-days course including the SIMEX, it actually improved a lot, especially from having personnel from government agency but also we have people from NGOs to attend the course as ERAT. By then they should already have an overview on how ERAT plays a major role during disasters.”

During regional simulation exercises, such as the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercises (ARDEX), ERAT members are also deployed and its system is tested in terms of how it is plugged into the regional response coordinating mechanisms. Dam Hoa from the Viet Nam Department of Dykes, Flood and Storm Control, played a key role in organising ARDEX-13 in her country. As an ERAT member, Hoa emphasised, “It’s our responsibility to cooperate for the collective response for the ASEAN region. ERAT is the symbol of our collective response in the region. Not only in Viet Nam, but in other ASEAN countries, if they host ARDEX, we fully incorporate ERAT because all the ASEAN members need to be refreshed of what they have learned and what to do in the missions. It’s necessary.”

The ASEAN assessment methodology applied currently makes full use of available knowledge and practice in post-disaster assessments. The comprehensive tool takes into account humanitarian needs in various sectors based on the Initial Needs Assessment Checklist. The five-page ERAT report concisely presents these findings, to the NDMO and to AHA Centre for consideration in developing its response plan and communicating with the assisting Member States the needs on the ground.

The ASEAN-ERAT Guidelines also provide a quick reference to minimum standards, the disaster response structure of the 10 Member States from the national to the village level, a guide to cultural practices, and even a metric conversion system.

One of ASEAN’S key civil society partners is the AADMER Partnership Group (APG). Vanda Lengkong represents Plan International in this consortium. “When the AHA Centre approaches APG to ask for some support, we check with the membership who is able to contribute. The AHA Centre asked APG for facilitators, and because I’ve been also a facilitator for emergency training courses for Plan, I have been involved in ERAT capacity building. I was also involved in the selection committee [for CSO participants in ERAT training courses]. One of Plan’s staff trained had been involved in the logistics during the Myanmar flood response.”

On the ERAT assessment methodology, Lengkong explained, “They make it practical and as close to the reality. That’s why they bring all their equipment — the Pelican box with ASEAN logo and the hi-tech. They’re even using drones. During training, some of the teams are really focused,” observed Vanda. “I think it’s a very comprehensive two-week training. There they have theory, the introduction of

the handbook, and then they go to the field. The guidelines are also not only for the use of AHA Centre but are also able to put it into specific contexts. Not all the countries have the same procedure, but ERAT will be guided when supporting the Member State.”

During a large-scale disaster operation, such as in Typhoon Haiyan, ERAT may also be expected to participate in joint recovery assessment needs such as in the conduct of Post-Disaster Needs Assessment or Damage and Loss Assessment.

Between the Bohol earthquake in July 2013 and Typhoon Haiyan in November, ARDEX-13 was hosted by Viet Nam in October. On the sidelines of the event, the first ERAT Refresher Course was organised to update selected participants from the first two batches of significant developments in ASEAN response system. When the first two induction courses were held, AHA Centre was still in its interim phase. Many of the mechanisms under AADMER were still at the level of idea or concept, and still difficult to grasp then. By 2013, there had been a number of concrete situations to put these mechanisms to work—in the Thailand flood, Mentawai and Myanmar earthquakes, and Typhoon Bopha. It was envisioned that refresher courses would provide the opportunity to continually update the knowledge and skills of the ERAT members from the lessons from completed deployments as well as with policy and operational upgrades in the system.

FROM “RAPID ASSESSMENT” TO “RESPONSE AND ASSESSMENT”

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course in April 2013, almost all of the AHA Centre’s staff were present, together with the Member States as participants, and APG partners as observers. It was a crucial induction for operations that would take place a few months later — the Bohol earthquake in the Philippines, and towards the end of that year, Typhoon Haiyan.

As soon as the Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS) projected the path and strength of Typhoon Haiyan, AHA Centre pre-positioned two staff in the Philippines — Arnel Capili, as the Team Leader on the ground, and Adi Bishry, the ICT staff.





Right after the incident, Regional Director of OCD Region 8 uses the satellite phone provided by ASEAN-ERAT

One day prior to landfall, Bishry arrived in Tacloban and worked with the Regional Office of Civil Defense, setting up the emergency telecommunications system and conducting training for the Office of Civil Defence on the use of satellite phones. Bishry was given a powerful, first-hand experience of a typhoon’s destructive capacity as ravaging winds swept through the city and the central islands of the Philippines. The satellite phone that he set-up a day before was the only functioning phone in Tacloban on the day the storm hit. Within one hour, the ASEAN-ERAT member in Tacloban was able to assist in the restoration of emergency telecommunication services, and the satellite phone was used to facilitate communications between the Regional Office and the high-ranking officials in the capital city.



Personnel of OCD Region 8 tests the BGAN set-up by ASEAN-ERAT prior to the landfall of Typhoon Haiyan

A four-member team arrived in Tacloban, and was later joined by a fifth member, Jommel Merano. After two weeks, a second wave of ERAT was deployed while AHA Centre staff procured supplies from Manila, set up the MSU in Guiuan, Samar, and continued to facilitate the reception and handover of ASEAN assistance to the Philippine response agencies on the ground.

For Janggam Adityawarma, the Haiyan experience was unforgettable. “It was my first major deployment and first mission as ERAT. After the induction training several months earlier, this was the time to apply what we learned.”

However, as a small team amidst a large-scale disaster, ERAT faced a number of challenges in trying to coordinate among a variety of humanitarian actors, in monitoring ongoing relief efforts, and in delivering significant amounts of relief supplies.

Adityawarma said, “Our biggest challenge was to try to make biggest impact as a single ASEAN response. We were not able to successfully do that.”

With three people on the ground, ERAT managed to prepare and coordinate the visit of the ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Minh during the first two weeks, whilst assisting the reception of regional assistance at the airport or the Tacloban seaport.

The team face an extremely difficult on the ground after its arrival in Tacloban. Debris and cadavers were strewn along the road. Electricity and water supplies were cut-off. People were walking aimlessly and in shock. There was no market to buy goods, and malls and stores were being looted. All gasoline stations were closed. There was nothing to start a response with.

Compounding matters, the ERAT team arrived without its own food, water, or vehicle. The capacity of ASEAN’s response, particularly, ERAT, was yet again challenged to the extreme.

Arnel Capili, the Team Leader for the Typhoon Haiyan response, said, “For me, out of that experience came the feeling that ASEAN could have done more. My lesson from that was that we need to structure how we respond. We need to bring more to the affected country, not necessarily bring more in quantity but a more targeted response that would add value to the Member States’ response. And that led to the declaration of the ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ vision and strategy — which is all about anticipating a large-scale disaster and preparing well in advance for a major response.”

In December of that year, during the ACDM meeting in Da Nang, Viet Nam, the ACDM agreed to rename ERAT from the “Emergency Rapid Assessment Team” to “Emergency Response and Assessment Team”. This change underscored the original intention of developing a rapid assessment team that was not only able to provide informative analysis of the impact of a disaster, but also to significantly come to the aid of the affected state and assist in delivering the regional response.

The AHA Centre, together with the ASEAN Secretariat, also led a comprehensive After-Action Review process, with consultations in the Philippines and in Jakarta. This review process produced the book *Weathering the Perfect Storm: Lessons Learnt on the ASEAN’s Response to the Aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan*. The lessons and recommendations from the review continue to find their way into regional disaster management policies, strategies and plans. In addition, ASEAN, using the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief (ADMER) Fund, also supported the Philippines’ lessons-learnt process, which produced the book *Y it happened: Learning from Typhoon Yolanda*, as Typhoon Haiyan was locally known, in partnership with the Philippines Office of Civil Defense and Oxfam (representing APG).






Image on left page: The AHA Centre has conducted 3 batches of ASEAN-ERAT induction course since the management of ASEAN-ERAT was handed over from Singapore

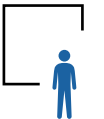
LESSONS LEARNT ENTER THE CLASSROOM


In June 2014, the AHA Centre hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course — its first course since the handover of responsibility from Singapore. Although it continued to draw support from SCDF, UNOCHA, AADMER Partnership Group, and the host country, Indonesia, the course significantly changed in content, structure and methodology in order to bring about the next chapter in the evolution of ERAT.


The fourth course improved upon the idea of academic and practical sessions used for previous cohorts, which had included a comprehensive overview of the international humanitarian system, AADMER, ASEAN mechanisms, functions of the AHA Centre, and the practical skills of using the emergency telecommunications equipment, doing rapid assessments, and coordinating with the NDMO and local emergency management authority (LEMA).


The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course introduced a number of improvements, such as using the AIDAS learning framework throughout the course, which utilises the following:

- 

Activity to introduce a topic or concept;
- 

Inputs from the resource person;
- 

Discussion;
- 

Application of the concepts in practical exercises; and
- 

Sharing of reflections, and synthesis of key conclusions.

New skills were also introduced, such as setting up the JOCCA (the idea was still being developed at the time), testing the automated alert notification, using the WebEOC, working with media, and even managing stress. Understanding culture within a response context was also given significant attention. With funding from Australia and Japan, the course’s duration was extended to two full weeks, which



included academic sessions and 100 hours of simulation exercises (SIMEX), which were designed to reflect lessons learned from previous deployments.

After several days of learning the concepts and conducting table-top exercises at the hotel, participants were transported to the SIMEX venue. Unaware of what was going to happen, participants were pushed to the limit, requiring both individuals and teams to make hard decisions about the response throughout the 48-hour simulation. To make the simulation as realistic as possible, each participant had to pass through a simulated customs and immigration inspection. Guest observers were given roles to play as journalists or as ambassadors, adding to the element of surprise for the participants. The overall goal of the heightened level of intensity was to prepare ERAT to effectively assist the affected country, coordinate the regional response on the ground, and to collect information and provide analysis of the evolving crisis.

The SIMEX not only tested the capacity of the participants, but also put pressure on the training team, which held daily briefings early in the morning to review the topics, scenarios and injections. And at the end of the day, the training team gathered to assess progress and to make last-minute adjustments for the next day’s session.

With even newer challenges, the ERAT Transformation Plan was also developed by the AHA Centre to increase the number of deployable ERAT members whether in-country or outside, as well as to develop a pool of human resources with specialised capacities and leadership abilities to direct an ERAT deployment at a moment’s request.

CHALLENGES FROM THE FIELD

Because of their constantly evolving dynamics, disaster environments place intense pressure on teams and team leadership. Despite best preparation efforts, plans always require flexibility and a willingness to work together in order to accomplish mission goals.

ERAT is, according to Winston Chang, “A meeting of friends, of family — of one family, the ASEAN family, under the ERAT banner. And we can hit the road running. The norming and storming phase is very short. Because we know your strength is with media, you could be the spokesperson for the team, for example. You know you already have an SOP based on the training methodology.”

Chang continued, “You know what the team needs, to make sure the team is well-looked after. And the fact there are regular trainings now, refresher courses, going on missions together, that allow the team to be able to hit the road running quickly. Because in a disaster, you can’t be arguing about different preferences. Team members have to be adaptable and flexible. So, all these things you know during the ERAT course — who is good at what, who cannot be deployed at all, and who can add value to the team. But when you are in a team, we are all equal. You bring your strength to the table and we capitalise on that strength.”

When asked about the challenges of being ERAT team leaders, here are a few remarkable stories by ERAT Team Leaders and members themselves.

“I don’t get to choose my team members,” said David Chow. “The team leader will also have to have a clear mind, like what is your mandate. You can lose focus easily. If you are with the NFP in the very first day and they tell you, ‘Don’t do this, don’t do that.’ You have to stay focused, telling them, convincing them, how your presence could help them, not burden them further. But we will help and we will try to work within what was defined by both parties so that we won’t cross the line. So, I think that’s the challenge.”

Luqman Hakim recalled how he felt when he received confirmation that he was being deployed for the Myanmar flood response in 2015. “Even though I was nervous at that time, I had to be ready for the deployment. That was a very exciting moment as well as a nervous moment for me, especially when the AHA Centre informed me that I was the team leader of the deployment. I was surprised. It made me really nervous because I didn’t have the experience in terms of responding on an international level to be a team leader.”

Hakim continued, “The team members were chosen by the AHA Centre, so there were six of us; three from Indonesia, two from Brunei, and one from Viet Nam. The first thing I did was to conduct a meeting between all the members that had already arrived, and I asked them about their capacity, skills, and

which areas they want to work in. It's quite easy to form the team actually because, based on their volunteerism, they knew the roles to take.

"I split up the team — I assigned one member to the EOC and another one I assigned to help the AHA Centre logistics officer to facilitate incoming relief items from ASEAN Member States, and also to establish the storage mobile unit in Mandalay and Yangon. So, only four of us went to do the assessment." The team was involved in a joint assessment, covering two locations in Myanmar, Hinthada and Maubin in Ayeyarwady Province. The government of Myanmar had asked for a detailed assessment of the needs of the affected people. Under the direction of the government, the team used the UNOCHA forms.

"It was a disaster situation so it was not as easy as in normal conditions," Hakim said. Travel from Naypidaw to Yangon took six hours. After overnighing in Yangon, the team travelled another two hours to Hinthada and Maubin. "After we arrived in Hinthada," he continued, "we had to change to a 4x4 vehicle because the area was not accessible to a normal van. I had to choose only three members. We left one of our members at the government centre to prepare the report. The funny thing was one of us had to sit in the back, as the cabin of the car didn't have enough seats. The one at the back of the car was one of our colleagues from Brunei, Mr. Ali. We had to spend two hours driving from there to the affected area. So can you imagine sitting at the back, with no proper seat?"

"After we arrived at the affected area, we first went to the sub-district office. We got an overview of the affected areas at the time. After that, we proceeded directly to visit the evacuation camps as well as, to see directly the affected areas. We also crossed a big lake or river. It was actually a paddy field that was flooded, so we used small boats. There was heavy rain. My camera and my cell phone got very wet. Then we visited the affected communities in one area. We did the dialogue also, we talked with the communities and how they were coping with the situation. We also asked about what they needed from the government, and also from other parties that could help them. It was quite rewarding but very, very tough for me. The situation was certainly not an ideal condition for work, which you cannot find in the ERAT guidelines. Flexibility was required to adapt to the situation. The assessment was done in three days. Then, we went back to Yangon and spent two nights there preparing the report. I also submitted 72-hour report the report to the In-Country Coordination Team as well as to the AHA Centre."

"Meeting new people is a common thing and is not a challenge for me," says Andreane Tampubolon, who was mainly responsible preparing the team's report. "It's a good thing also to learn about the

local people, the local context. At the time, my main role was to prepare the report and to deal with administrative matters. I'm not sure if it had to do with me being the only woman in the team. They assigned me to that, but nevertheless, I was being appreciated by the team. There was also secondary data that had to be included in the report, but the data was in Myanmar language, so I worked with a local liaison officer. We translated the data to come up with the report.

"I think it's good that the variety of backgrounds and capacities can enrich the team. Even though we had various backgrounds, we managed to agree upon what we were going to do and what activities were to be carried out. More or less, the basic activities are the same for any humanitarian response — it's a matter of administration and bureaucracy. But the basic principle, you have to work using the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. The previous experience I had with the Red Cross was helpful in a way that I am used to work with the beneficiaries and also with other stakeholders. On this mission, I got a chance to experience working with the government, assisting the NDMO in another country, which is quite unique. With the government, you have to be more diplomatic. There is a system that you need to understand.

The flexibility required on ERAT deployments also includes long work hours. In her previous experiences, Tampubolon said field activities usually had to finish 6 p.m. for security reasons, but in Myanmar, she said, "We had to leave for the province in the morning and be back in the evening. It was a 3–4 hour drive from Hinthada back to Yangon. We arrived in Yangon at almost midnight. I never experienced that before. It did not happen often, but because we couldn't stay in Hinthada district, we all decided to go back to Yangon. It had been planned.

"It's up to you how to adapt to the situation," Tampubolon said. "If I'm doing the emergency response in Indonesia, I'm doing it in the country that I live in. If you're being deployed outside your country you have to obey the local context, you have to understand, and apply it accordingly. The difference is, it is outside your country, that's why you have to adapt more. You have to adapt to the language. It is not the first time for me to go a country where English is their first language. But you have to find a way to communicate. You have to Google the language. I collected as many words in Burmese as much as I could, for basic communication like 'good morning,' 'thank you,' and 'have a nice day'."

Janggam Adityawarma shared the challenges he faced after taking over the leadership for the second wave of the Haiyan response. "During our travel to and from Guiuan, the curfew was still in place. We were trying to rush back because it was a one-day trip. There was no electricity. All the roads were

Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT member from Indonesian Red Cross gathers data and information from local government



dark. We had mixed feelings — some excitement, some worry. We could still track the road using our GPS so we knew the driver was going the wrong way. We might have gone to a hostile area. We had our OCD liaison officer with us to explain to authorities at the checkpoints. None of us were Filipino, so we could not speak the language.

“Another time, we were travelling at night, the driver had to pee, so he stopped the vehicle along the road. People started to come near us. They were probably expecting relief items or assistance. We were lucky we were able depart by the time the people got to our car.”

Adityawarma said that dealing with media could also be challenging. “By accident, we were interviewed by two national radio stations when they saw us wearing ASEAN t-shirts. During the interview, we had to give a balanced perspective and not involve our personal views. I had to be cautious and careful about that. And that was my first on-the-spot interview experience.”

Arnel Capili reflected on the variety of decisions a team leader has to make. “The Haiyan response was about creativity, because it was the first large-scale response ever by AHA Centre. We also didn’t know how we will position ourselves—as ASEAN, as ERAT, as a coordinating centre, as the AHA Centre?

“I felt, too, that we had to get to Adi, who was already Tacloban days before the landfall. So, he was there when the typhoon happened. He remained alone in a foreign country and he needed the support. It was imperative for us, the other team members to get there. Whatever it takes. So we had to do everything we could to get to Tacloban as soon as we could, and we did. It goes back to my earlier point about spontaneous decisions. There were so many plans we deliberated on, but those plans never materialised because there were too many factors, variables that changed. You have to make a plan for every letter of the alphabet, if Plan A doesn’t materialise.”

“There was the advantage of having a local ERAT in the team,” Capili said, referring to ERAT members from the affected country who have undergone induction courses. They prove to be invaluable resources and links for the multi-country ERAT deployment, working with the NDMO’s local liaison officers to provide mutual support to access disaster-affected areas and to arrange translation services. “It’s also

about the network of the local ERAT as well as the ability to use backdoor channels if you can't go through the main ones," Capili said.

Plans are not only important for achieving operational goals, but also play a key role in keeping ERAT teams safe, Arnel said. "The other thing I learned was that there should always be a plan to evacuate the team. I remember when we had response calls from Jakarta, I would tell them to prepare a plan just in case the situation worsened. There was looting and gunfire. I was afraid that it was going to worsen and we would be caught in the middle of it all. So, the AHA Centre EOC was behind the scene trying to get airlift for us."

Capili said flexibility was a key to success in any deployment. "For a newbie ERAT member, I would tell them to be prepared for the worst and also prepare for a hotel-like accommodation in a response. They have to be flexible at far ends of the spectrum during a response, from a Typhoon Haiyan-type of a response where there is nothing, literally. Even if you had money in your pockets, you might still have problems. And a response like in Myanmar, where we were billeted in a very nice hotel in Mandalay. ERAT should be that flexible, but always be prepared for the worst."

ERAT has also been deployed outside the region, as part of UNDAC. For example, ERAT members were part of UNOCHA's deployment in Fiji and Oman in 2015. These deployments helped to further build the capacity of ERAT through exposure to different response contexts, and helped to strengthen understanding of the UNDAC system, to help improve inter-operability of ERAT and UNDAC systems.

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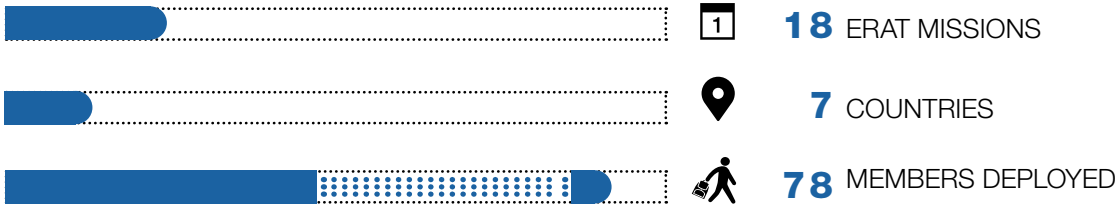
## ERAT ON THE GROUND: EXPERIENCES FROM MAJOR DISASTERS



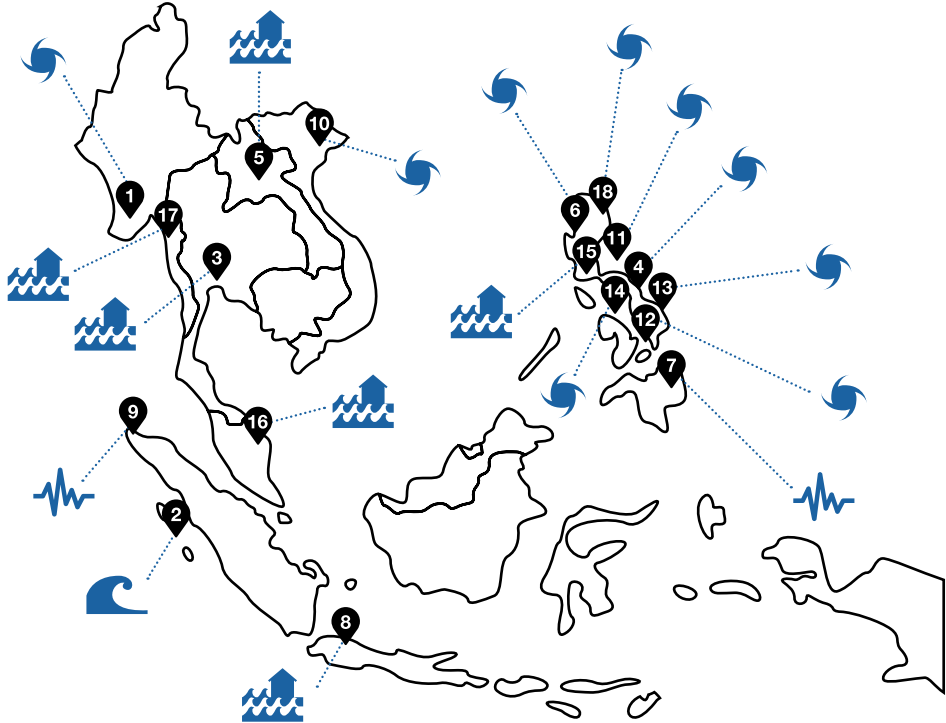
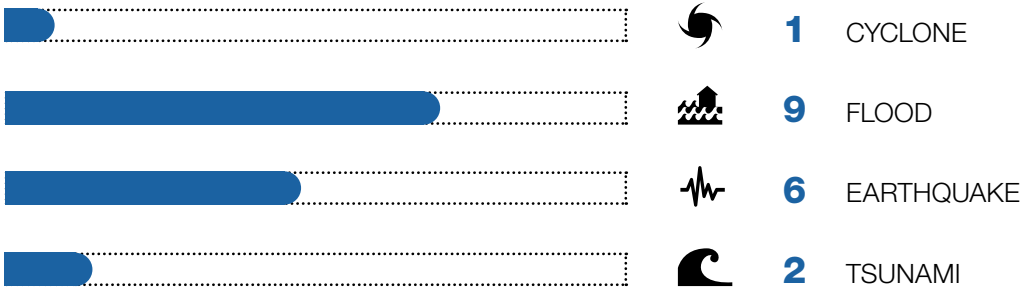


ASEAN-ERAT  
MISSIONS 2008-2016

as of 30 November 2016



NUMBER OF ASEAN-ERAT  
MISSION BY DISASTER TYPE



- 1 CYCLONE NARGIS  
MYANMAR, 2008

2 MENTAWAI EARTHQUAKE & TSUNAMI  
INDONESIA, 2010

3 FLOOD  
THAILAND, 2011

4 TYPHOON BOPHA  
PHILIPPINES, 2012

5 FLOOD  
LAO PDR, 2013

6 TYPHOON HAIYAN  
PHILIPPINES, 2013
- 7 BOHOL EARTHQUAKE  
PHILIPPINES, 2013

8 FLOOD  
INDONESIA, 2013

9 ACEH EARTHQUAKE  
INDONESIA, 2013

10 TYPHOON RAMMASUN  
VIET NAM, 2014

11 TYPHOON RAMMASUN  
PHILIPPINES, 2014

12 TYPHOON HAGUPIT  
PHILIPPINES, 2014
- 13 TYPHOON MELOR  
PHILIPPINES, 2015

14 TYPHOON KOPPU  
PHILIPPINES, 2015

15 FLOOD  
PHILIPPINES, 2015

16 FLOOD  
MALAYSIA, 2015

17 FLOOD  
MYANMAR, 2015

18 TYPHOON HAIMA  
PHILIPPINES, 2016





*“The ability of ERAT to adjust to the scale and needs of the affected Member States is a must.”*

*- Luqman Hakim (Indonesia), ERAT Team Leader for Myanmar Flood (2015)*

**THAILAND FLOOD 2011:  
ON THE GROUND AND ACCEPTED**

During the last quarter of 2011, floodwaters inundated 24 provinces across the central region of Thailand, including portions of its capital, Bangkok. This unprecedented catastrophe affected more than a million people, and halted global supply chains as major warehouses were underwater. In the beginning of the response to the floods, there was some initial resistance to international assistance. However, through the help of then ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, who had formerly served as the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, ASEAN was able to secure approval to conduct assessments in Thailand.

Arun Pinta was one of the first “local ERAT” members involved in the Thailand Flood response. He had been fully inducted as an UNDAC and ERAT member in 2010, and had previously supported Cyclone Nargis response operations in Myanmar as part of Thailand’s diplomatic corps.

Pinta recalled, “The AHA Centre at the time was quite new. They did not have much of the resources. They decided to send the small team of ERAT to Bangkok. And given that I was working with [the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation] DDPM, I was requested to join the ERAT mission in response to the Bangkok floods. The problem for me at that time was that I was a DDPM staff, meaning that I had a duty to work for my government, for my country. So, I did not spend 100 percent of my time as ERAT. I joined two assessments — one in Ayutthaya province, and one assessment using a

helicopter from the police. I joined the discussion between the Team Leader, Mr. David Chow, and the local disaster management authority at the time. I was the one facilitating the discussion between the team leader and Thailand authorities”.

Pinta went on, “At that time we did not have the DELSA programme, we did not have any of the relief items from the warehouse, which we now have in Malaysia. We just relied on the team conducting the assessment and the report of the Bangkok flood. It was the best report by far I’ve seen from the ERAT mission team. It was very a dangerous situation in Ayutthaya province because we had to pass through high levels of inundation. Our car almost got stuck in the middle of the flood. It was very scary. All of the ERAT members joined that mission, with Mr. Amnat as our driver. A national TV station, Thai PBS, followed us for a TV scoop. We came back safely. Many things happened, including the visit to one local radio station. They interviewed us, after we had come back from the assessment”.

David Chow, the ERAT Team Leader for the Bangkok Flood deployment, said, “By the time we had the Bangkok deployment, we were more prepared for it because we had gone through the Manado exercise,” referring to the ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF-DiREx) held in Manado in March 2011. “The equipment we brought along in Manado was sufficient for us to operate in Bangkok. So we adopted almost the same methodology for the Bangkok deployment,” he said.

Chow continued, “Floods were coming down from the northern part of Thailand, and it threatened to go into inner Bangkok. So at that point in time, the Thailand NFP already set up the Flood Relief Operations Centre at the airport, which is now a domestic airport.

“The ASEAN Secretariat was concerned. UNDAC was concerned. So, they wanted us to try to gather our team members so that we were able to be deployed at a moment’s notice. The only problem was that, at that point in time, Thailand was not ready to accept any international assistance. We already sent the form for Offer of Request. We’re just waiting for the request from the affected country to come, but that never came. But in the meantime, I think, the ASEAN Secretariat already tried to run down who’s at the level to be deployed at a moment’s notice and I was being informed about it.”

Chow continued, “At that moment in time, we still did not have a good activation system in place, not the automated kind like UNDAC, where you send to members and you reply with your availability, to facilitate UNOCHA’s ability to choose who they want to form as a team. So, it was up to us to see who was available. I can’t recall the ones who actually assembled the team. It could be Adelina or Kadir,



Image on left page: ASEAN-ERAT members talk to the community affected by Thai flood 2011

who was working on SASOP. So, the team was formed. We were a five-member team, excluding the Thais. The Thai team members, when we were there, came on board since they were already operating at their operations centre”.

However, things did not go as smoothly as were hoped, Chow said. “It was not a very good first meeting with the NFP because they really thought they could manage the incident, and there was no need for external parties to come in and do an independent assessment of the situation and the needs.

“Anyway, we received the letter and ASEAN gave us the go-ahead to be deployed,” Chow said. “We came in two phases because we were coming from two countries. We made a booking to a hotel, bought a local SIM card. The mobile network was still functioning. And, we prepared for the next team to come. We had our internal meeting to sort out what we want to do for the next few days.

“In Thailand, it was a bit difficult because even if we rented a car, nobody was willing to drive us into the affected areas,” Chow explained. “So we asked for some form of support, in terms of transportation and it was not readily available for us. So we had to find our own way. I tried to contact some friends from Thailand to see whether they could help. In the end, the support from some sections in the DDPM was quite good. We had Aimee who was very resourceful in trying to help us.

“Arun was there in my team, together with Sawita and Amnat, who were in the second induction course,” Chow said “Amnat knew many people on the ground, so we were able to move around freely with a DDPM vehicle, and to the flood affected areas while they were distributing relief items to some of the relief centres. We were able to hop on to trucks and lorries and go to places so we could do our assessment.

“That’s why in my report I said that in a situation where we respond to an affected country, the team should have people from the affected country because they know the place well and even speak the language, because when we interview people, not everyone can speak English. So it’s good to have local team members to do the translation and get resources, to move around, to facilitate your interviews. In the case of our team, the three of them knew people from the local DDPM office. They

knew who was in charge of areas. They were able to make phone calls to fix appointments, so we could interview the people managing the evacuation centres or relief efforts. We were able to find information from the people directly managing on the ground.”

Chow continued, “The main mandate that we were given was to find out the most immediate needs of the affected population. When we were deployed there, the whole Don Muang airport was used as the relief item collection and distribution centre. Besides one corner that was being used as the operations centre, and the various ministries supporting the relief efforts, we were given an office there to set up our workstation as well. We were able to go down and see where they packed all the relief items. They had truckloads of rice and all the food items, non-food items and they had a lot of volunteers helping them to pack these in household packs...The items were quite comprehensive, from food items to non-food. They looked into the different needs of the people, like milk powder to sanitary napkins. Most of the people in a typical household were being looked after.

“But we realised there were issues,” Chow said. “They shipped these relief items from Don Muang airport to the relief centres. There were some regional centres set up within affected areas. But the problem was, when they offloaded there, there were issues in trying to distribute these to the affected households under the jurisdiction of these relief centres, which were dry. But you could see that there were people staying back, looking after their properties. They had people staying on the rooftops. So these people were those who needed help, they needed something to sustain their occupation. But the issue was, these relief items were distributed only at the relief centres.

“So what the local officials did was they made a number of makeshift rafts, with floatation items like jerry cans bundled together,” Chow recalled. “They tried to paddle and give out these items to these people. But they were not able to cover a wide area. So one of the things we reported to the ASEAN Secretariat then was there was an immediate need of some kind of flat-bottomed boats so that they could do the distribution — even better, if they could come with engines. At that point in time, we had a check of the local market. Boats and engines were not readily available. So the suggestion then was to purchase them elsewhere and ship them over to Thailand so they could be distributed immediately.

“We were trying to tell them these were the needs on the ground so that there would be an improvement in the distribution of items. The ASEAN Secretariat tried to get things from ASEAN Member States for donations or whatever, but that didn’t really come through. That was the frustration. Unlike UNDAC deployment, they have relief funds available that can be used for the most immediate need. At that time, we did not have this fund.”

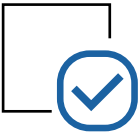
Based on these lessons, the DELSA stockpile in Subang, Malaysia now includes flat-bottom boats with outboard engines. The funds currently managed by the AHA Centre have also been used to purchase boats locally, as in the case of the response to flooding in the Philippines caused by Typhoon Maring/Trami in 2013.



Image on left page: First arrival of ASEAN-ERAT members at ground zero is a critical moment since they will often face many uncertainties and unexpected situations

**TYPHOON HAIYAN 2013:  
ANATOMY OF ASEAN'S RESPONSE  
DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS**

Gaynor Tanyang was one of the handful of ERAT members deployed in response to Typhoon Haiyan. She still vividly remembers those first two weeks as a member on the ground.



**Activation**

“When news emerged that a very strong typhoon was going to hit the Philippines in early November, I was in Bangkok in a planning workshop with the Oxfam regional humanitarian team,” Tanyang said. “I was then the Interim Programme Manager of the consortium, the AADMER Partnership Group, that was working with ASEAN to expand the participation and support of civil society in implementing AADMER at regional, national and local levels.

“I had helped the AHA Centre run the first ERAT Refresher Course, held in parallel of the ARDEX-13 in Viet Nam. Perhaps because of this background of regional mechanisms and being a Filipino, I got a call from one of the AHA Centre staff, Ferny, I think, asking if I could be deployed for the response. Everyone was still monitoring the typhoon’s path in the Pacific Ocean. I spoke with my line manager, Orla Murphy, who was hesitant at first to give me away for two weeks. I can’t remember what convinced her, but an email request from Pak Said Faisal probably did the trick.”



**Be on the ground within 48 hours**

“So cutting my Bangkok trip short, I prepared to leave for Manila. Upon arriving home, I immediately packed to leave for Tacloban, which was projected to be where the landfall was going to be. I met the team — Arnel, Shazwan and Zikri — at Megamall where we purchased sleeping bags and a few personal items. The plan was to fly to Legazpi and go on a land-and-sea trip from there to Tacloban,



about 8 hours travel southeast. The AHA Centre from Jakarta could not get us plane tickets, so we decided instead to fly to Cebu and take another plane or boat to Tacloban.

“Upon arriving in Cebu early evening, we checked in at a hotel where the taxi driver brought us, as we did not have a prior reservation. This was on 8 November. News broke that the typhoon has already made landfall in Tacloban and Samar, causing severe damage. We immediately went to the seaport to purchase ferry tickets going to Tacloban or Ormoc. The ticketing agent said there were no trips going that direction in the next two days.

“We went back to the hotel and I started to map out an assessment plan. I did a 4x4 matrix of what critical information we needed to gather. News from Tacloban was very sparse.

“After doing a few more things, I couldn’t sleep, and saw the clock hit midnight. I went down to the lobby. I saw a couple of guys there in UN vests, but decided I wasn’t feeling sociable, they looked busy anyway. That was when a vehicle parked, and guys in coastguard shirts stormed out of the vehicle. I saw them check in at the reception, and I decided to approach one of the guys, who coincidentally was their team leader. I introduced myself as ASEAN, and asked if they were going to Tacloban since they seemed to be prepared for a response, and he said ‘yes.’ They were the volunteer auxiliary coastguards so they were also figuring out how to get to Tacloban. They later told me that there was a military aircraft leaving for Tacloban, but they don’t know if they would be able to allow people in. By 4 a.m., we were off to the airbase.

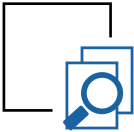
“In the darkness of dawn, I was orienting the team about the assessment plan, distributing a print-out of the 4x4 rubric I did from the hotel. Then, we saw people were being boarded on the plane but our names were not called to board. Only the police, and maybe health and social welfare staff were allowed to board. At promptly 6 a.m., we saw the plane leave for Tacloban. We heard from conversations that there was looting and some peace and order concerns after the typhoon.

“We learned that there was another flight that morning to Tacloban. We went queued and waited for our names to be called. This time again, we were not called to board. The same guys in the UN vests I saw at the hotel left on that flight. The only consolation I gave myself at the time was that the coastguard auxiliary group was also still waiting like us.

“At 1 p.m. we decided to take a quick lunch at a carinderia (a pop-up eatery) and made sure we were back quickly.

“After finishing our lunch, we each took the small half-empty bottled water back to the airbase because there was no water there. At around 2 or 3 pm, there was a buzz at the airbase because there was another flight leaving for Tacloban. We quickly grabbed our bags and literally pushed ourselves into the queue to secure our spot on the flight.

“Finally! We were being boarded after waiting some 10 hours. Inside the C-130, there were petrol drums at the centre of the fuselage. On top of that, were sacks of rice, and on top of those, bags. Men were asked to sit on top of the pile. A few of us women who were able to board were told to stand at the sides. I thought the flight would take some time so I decided to climb up where the guys in my team were sitting on top of the rice sacks, and got myself seated there too.”



Do the assesment

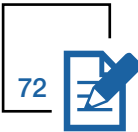
“The moment our feet touched the Tacloban airport tarmac and our eyes saw the airport had been collapsed beyond recognition, we instantly knew it was so much worse than we could have ever imagined. This time, there were no gates or walls that kept the public separate from passengers. We went inside and through what was left of the airport building, avoiding the mountains of debris and mud. There was a foot-thick, solid wall that was pushed to the other side of the building that could only have been moved by an enormous force. We got to the other side of the building with our rolling luggage in tow.

“Shazwan saw one guy he knew from a UNDAC training. The men exchanged a very tight hug. The UNDAC staff, Sukata from Japan, was detailed at the airport as OSOCC, and he led us to his ‘office’ in the next building. The OSOCC office was a makeshift room covered with mud and no trace of doors or windows. There was a table that held his laptop where we registered, and a metal sofa that was useful only to hold bags off the mud.

“Without our own vehicle, the only way to get to the OCD office was walk. Arnel and I were concerned that it might not be a safe option. We might have to spend overnight at the airport, but we did not have

any tents, only sleeping bags. There were so many people at the airport. Many were asking for water. We also realised the only water supply we had with us was the half-empty bottle we brought from lunch.

“I came across a man who was the mayor of one town who came to the airport hoping to find some help for his village. I got some details from him and noted them down. I asked the two other members of the team to interview people at the airport and gather as much information about where they were from and what the situation was in their village.”



**Submit a report within 72 hours**

“Overwhelmed by what I saw and was hearing, I decided to hit the keyboard for the first ERAT field report. I found a place to work and started typing away, while taking the time to light a cigarette. Then, a man in military uniform approached me and asked for a cigarette, so I gladly gave him one. A few minutes later, he came back and said, his superior sent him to see if he could also ask for a cigarette. That was when an idea hit me. I told him, ‘I have a newly opened pack. I can give it all to you, if you will give me a jug of water in exchange.’ He came back with a gallon of water that was going to be the team’s supply for as long as possible.

“Sukata started rounding up the people at the airport who were there intending to do some sort of response or assessment. He briefed us on what he’d seen of the damage so far. After the brief meeting, he and Arnel agreed to do an assessment together, further away from the airport. And so we started walking. This is when I captured the photo of the two guys in their ASEAN and UN vests, doing the assessment together.

“We hadn’t walked far when the OCD vehicle arrived to pick us up. After we got our stuff into the vehicle, we headed for the OCD office. When we arrived, Adi was so overjoyed to see us. He told us about his experience during the storm. His back was now aching painfully after crouching under a table for hours and holding it to the floor to protect him against rain, shattered glass and debris that the howling wind was spinning in the air.

“We had a team meeting to debrief and discussed the draft report. We submitted the report afterwards.”



**Assist the affected country**

“The first morning after arrival, we headed to the government’s command centre. We attended meetings and tried to be helpful or useful.”

Arnel Capili recalled, “What was nice about ERAT was, we were not treated as different, as coming from the outside. I still remember all of us were invited to partake of the food, and I didn’t see that it was being offered to the other foreigners. It was their food but the fact that they shared it with us spoke about how they viewed ASEAN. Food for ASEAN is something sacred”.

Gaynor recalls, “The next morning, as we were waiting for the OCD vehicle to pick us up so we could go to the response coordination centre several kilometres away, Arnel spoke to the team with these words, ‘Our mission here has failed.’ My heart sank. Up until then, I was hoping to be able to do assessments in the surrounding areas of Tacloban, but we were kept from doing so because we did not have our own vehicles to move around, let alone our own food and water supply. That was when the team started to plan for our challenging exit from Tacloban”.



**Do whatever it takes**

“Adi, Shazwan and Zikri had tickets from Tacloban to Manila that the Jakarta office had purchased online. Commercial airlines had started to charter passengers to and from the Tacloban airport. Their flight was at something like 3 p.m. Arnel told the guys to try and look for a vehicle that could take them to the airport. Moments later they came back and said no one wanted to take them to airport. The whole team was outside the OCD office, trying to think of a way for the guys to get to the airport. There was a space that was covered with tarpaulin that probably served as a waiting area of some sort during normal times.

“It started to drizzle and then rain started pouring. I was waving at every vehicle that comes along. Whoever stopped, I asked if they would take us to the airport. Not one said yes. Gasoline was in short



supply, with stations that were open limiting the amount of fuel sold to every customer. The queue to buy fuel was long.

“If the guys had to walk their way to the airport, that decision had to be made immediately, because it was some 10 kilometres away. But the situation might not be safe, with the three of them all being foreigners. Finally, Arnel told the guys to start walking to the airport but not to use the ASEAN shirt. The guys quickly changed shirts so they could be passed off as locals, we hoped, as we later bid them goodbye with their luggage and a Pelican case. We told them that as soon as we got a vehicle, we would pick them up along the way.

“As for the two of us Filipinos, we also agreed to go to Cebu and come back with our own supplies and vehicles. We wondered if we should start walking, too, towards the airport. I went inside to pack my things. When I got outside, there was already a vehicle that Arnel was able to secure. We immediately put our stuff into the vehicle and headed for the airport, looking for the rest of our team along the way. It had been some 3 kilometres when we saw the guys wading through the flooded street.

“We reached the airport and again went our separate ways. The three guys went to the makeshift check-in counter. I went to the area where the military was stationed and looked for the general I had met there days before. I negotiated for them to let us tag along in one of the choppers that was going to Cebu. But the choppers were already at full capacity. I waited a bit more, thinking of how to convince him to save us some seats, and then decided to find Arnel and tell him of my unsuccessful venture.





“I was surprised to see my other ERAT members walking towards me. They told me that their tickets were not honoured because the online system could not be accessed. The counters were only issuing tickets manually, and they would have to wait until the next morning to board a flight, if there were still seats left. But they told me Arnel found a way to get us a lift out of Tacloban.”

Capili recalls, “I saw this military guy, and saw a Singaporean flag. I didn’t know him, but just introduced myself as ASEAN and explained we were an ERAT team deployed to the ground, and we needed to get out. The Singaporean officer spoke to the commander of the C-130 to accommodate us. And that was how we got the team on board the American C-130.”

Tanyang said, “We had to be creative and flexible in our plans to accomplish what we could during that response. We had Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C, for every challenge we faced. We connected with friends and friends of friends, even to strangers, to accomplish what we needed to do. To me, that was what

ERAT needs to be—to make full use of your abilities and connections—to deliver on our mandate, that is, to demonstrate ASEAN solidarity and sincere intent to assist an affected Member State.”

The scale, impact, and scope of the destruction brought on by Haiyan, and the challenges demanded by the emergency situation, tested the existing procedures and mechanisms including ERAT. Documenting the experience and drawing up lessons-learnt from this response underscore the imperative to assess the effectiveness of existing procedures and mechanisms and plan for improvements. The lessons from Typhoon Haiyan response were documented in the book “Weathering the Perfect Storm”, which also covers several recommendations for the enhancement of ERAT including:

-  **Improving ERAT’s basic skills and knowledge on disaster response and expanding the range of special skills of ERAT members.**
-  **Establishing a coordination centre for all ASEAN teams, both in the capital and in the field, for quality operational and tactical coordination.**
-  **Enhancing and institutionalising better civil-military coordination.**
-  **Enhancing the collective response, including the mobilisation of other relevant sectors and resources within ASEAN.**

The above lessons and recommendations from Typhoon Haiyan led to the development of various new initiatives in ASEAN and the AHA Centre, including the ERAT Transformation Plan, Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA), SASOP Chapter VI: Facilitation and Utilisation of Military Assets and Capacities, as well as the recent vision of “One ASEAN, One Response”.

**TYPHOON RAMMASUN 2014:  
ASEAN’S PREPAREDNESS  
STRENGTHENED BY SOLIDARITY**

Seven months after Typhoon Haiyan, a super typhoon was spotted in the Pacific Ocean that was projected to pass through the Philippines and Viet Nam. The AHA Centre monitored the developing storm, named Typhoon Rammasun, using the Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS), and remained on Yellow Alert (standby mode) for a possible response. Arnel Capili was communicating with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), which requested the AHA Centre to remain on standby. It was the first time that the AHA Centre operated around the clock to monitor a developing situation.

Agustina Thunay recalls, “As soon as the typhoon made landfall in Bicol, Arnel got the call from Director Raffy of Region IV-A. He mentioned the needs and damages, and immediately, we deployed. [The team] was going to be myself for logistics, Adi for ICT and Arnel as the head of the delegation. I was the one to do the local procurement”.

“We departed at midnight and when we arrived in the early morning, we went straight to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council [NDMRRMC] meeting. We met with the Director of Operations and they listed to us the needs. Arun and Raihan arrived one day after us. We spent two days and two nights in Manila because I needed to do local procurement, purchasing tarpaulins and a generator because electricity was down. They asked that the generator arrive within one day. Because we had good relations with WFP, we requested the generator from their Manila warehouse and replaced the stock later. That generator was really appreciated by Director Raffy because it arrived on time in Legazpi and supplied the lights to the regional office compound, located in a military camp.

“During the meeting with Undersecretary Pama on the morning of the third day, it was decided that we would travel by land because there were no flights. At 2 p.m., we left for Bicol and arrived around lunch time the following day [under normal conditions, the same trip takes 8–10 hours]. We had to make several stops along the way because it was zero visibility. I almost collapsed from motion sickness and the winding roads so we stayed overnight in Lucena City.

“We were met by Director Raffy and were introduced to the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council [RDRRMC] who was having a meeting at time. I remember the chief of the air force, armed forces, police, social welfare, and other local authorities were there. They said that the damage was minimal. Director Raffy invited us to join an aerial assessment, but it did not happen because of the weather. The day after, Adi and I went for a quick assessment with one of the staff from the regional office. We met with mayors and heads of barangays [districts or wards]. We saw some of the elementary schools where the roof collapsed.

“We stayed in Legazpi three days. They advised us to stay at the nicest hotel because it was the only hotel that had electricity. We were able to talk to a CNN reporter. A lot of the humanitarian actors were already in the area. We had a meeting with one of APG members at the hotel, exchanging information because they were already on the ground.

“One ERAT member was activated in Cebu, Neil Sanchez, in case the typhoon would pass that area first. It was also reported that there was damage there. He arrived in Cebu at the same time we arrived in Manila.

“At the time, we were double-hatting as AHA Centre staff and as ERAT members. Rammasun was my first assignment since joining the AHA Centre. My experience then was completely different from when I was with WFP. We handed over the relief items to Director Raffy.

“We had very good communication with Jakarta, so it was a good collaboration. That’s the first time also for the AHA Centre to conduct parallel missions.

“During that time, we didn’t have the ERO [Emergency Response Organisation] guidelines yet, that outlined the difference between the AHA Centre and ERAT. Before that, we all double-hatted. Now, it will be decided upon at activation that staff will deploy strictly as AHA Centre staff or as ERAT. Under the ERO guidelines, AHA Centre staff deployed on the ground will be called the In-Country Coordination Team [ICCT], co-located at the capital and attached to the NDMO.”

Yoram Lukas, was assigned as the Team Leader for the parallel mission in Viet Nam, recalled his experience. “We decided to send two teams. At the time also we wanted to pre-position ourselves, at the capital in Hanoi, attached to the CCFSC. We were appointed to attach to the Ministry of Agriculture



Image on left page: The ASEAN-ERAT member, together with the Philippines' NDMO, armed force and police unload relief items during response to Typhoon Rammasun in 2014

to do a pre-assessment in locations where the typhoon was projected to pass. We were accompanied by staff from the CCFSC.

“We did observations in five locations, to look at what were the preparedness actions that had been done by CCFSC and the local government. We visited the evacuation area, the community residents and houses. When we reached a district, we introduced ourselves as the AHA Centre, and said we were there to help and also to learn about how the preparedness was done in Viet Nam. The second objective was, if there were any gaps in the preparedness, we would try to support the NDMO, based on the AHA Centre’s capacities.

“On a daily basis,” Lukas said, “we had a coordination meeting with the EOC in Jakarta. We updated them on what kinds of actions were being taken by the government, and what recommendations we made to fill the gaps. That time, we informed the NDMO what materials were available in Subang, including for a first response, family tents, and aluminium boats. At the end, the government stated that there was no need for foreign assistance at the time when the typhoon landed.

“Because we were attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, we joined the meetings held by the Minister. They had their conference call with districts and sub-districts, updating the situation in local language. We were acknowledged by the Minister. We were the only ones that were not part of the government allowed during those meetings.

“Even for Ms. Dam Hoa, it was her first time to visit the sites with the Minister. Ms. Dam Hoa was the staff member of the CCFSC who was bridging the ASEAN-ERAT to conduct the preparedness mission to Viet Nam. She had been very helpful as an ERAT member. She already knew well the role of ERAT, the kind of activities we would do for the assessment and response.

“The preparedness of the local government and the CCFSC was remarkable,” Lukas said. “They were already blasting the information two or three days before [landfall] through media, television, radio, and community loud speakers. They already pre-positioned their evacuation centre, located not

in the school. They used government buildings to serve as the evacuation centres. That time, flash floods were the main threat, and they already evacuated the people living near the riverbanks to the evacuation centre. When I saw the television announcements, they provided guidelines how to protect their houses, including putting sandbags on the roof, and how to protect their livestock.

“That was my first time as Team Leader, and I was with Yos Malole, who was new to AHA Centre, and Andrew. We already agreed on the specific tasks with each of the team members. Yos and I deployed to the potentially affected area. We requested Andrew to be positioned at the EOC so he could update valuable information related to the Rammasun response, and feed it to the Jakarta EOC.”

As his first mission, ERAT manager Yos Malole recalled, “The most significant thing from that mission was our involvement in the internal meetings. They accepted us. Our position was clear that we were on standby and we were also there to learn more about how to operate. Any needs, they told us what to do. We could also see that the situation was under control”.

Typhoon Rammasun created a situation that was new and unique for the AHA Centre; namely, it had to coordinate two separate responses across two nations for one disaster event. The Typhoon Rammasun response also pushed the AHA Centre to consider preparing its capacity to respond to more than one disaster at a time. As a result of this response, the AHA Centre has improved its incident command system called Emergency Response Organisation (ERO) and used multi-country or multi-hazard situations for disaster scenarios during training and simulation exercises, preparing participants for the unique and multi-faceted context faced when responding to the challenge of coordinating multiple disaster responses simultaneously.

# 5







*“Attract more ERAT members and make the ERAT missions more successful.”*

*- Arun Pinta (Thailand), ERAT Pioneer*

AS LOCAL AS POSSIBLE

Despite the initial challenges during the Cyclone Nargis response in Myanmar in 2008, ERAT pioneer Winston Chang said, “The government did appreciate what we did, they welcomed us, and the fact that we were from ASEAN...and most of them, we knew each other by names and faces from previous exercises. That sort of got the team hitting the ground running”.

“That is the strength of the ERAT system. Because for one, regionally, the folks there are acclimatised. No one is coming in that is unaware of the culture. More so now, we have members from the affected countries themselves, so they become a good point of contact, either the authorities, the villages — who’s the mayor, who’s in charge — the different hierarchy.”

Mohammad Shazwan, a member of the ERAT Advisory Group, notes the importance of growing the number of local ERAT members, in providing links and supporting an understanding of the prevailing safety and security conditions for the response. “For the Thai flood, we had local members of ERAT to work along with the team. We had Arun, Sawita and Amnat, to assist us for the assessment of the Thai flood. Back then, the arrangement for the daily work was not very neat. Even though we were driving during the flood, we were doing assessments until late in the night. We did some improvements from to time, such as not to work during night time due to security reasons.”

Dam Hoa has been an ERAT member since the first ERAT induction course, and has deployed in exercises in Manado, Indonesia, and in Hua Hin, Thailand. She played a leading role in organising

ARDEX-13, which was hosted by Viet Nam, and which was the first ARDEX to be held when the AHA Centre was fully functional. She said, “Being involved in these exercises as an ERAT member gave me an opportunity to see all the players in the exercise. So I could see the overall picture when organising ARDEX in my country in October 2013”.

Indeed, as Said Faisal noted, “More and more, ASEAN Member States will be relying on in-country resources, understanding that each ASEAN Member State will build more and more of its own capacity to manage disasters. This stresses the fact that the AHA Centre will need to remain efficient, effective, and continuously adjust itself to stay relevant and add value to the Member States. For the past five years of the establishment of the AHA Centre and responding to disasters in the region, the AHA Centre has learned that every response is a different learning point that has shaped the AHA Centre today”.

“The AHA Centre’s first response was the earthquake in Myanmar. That was interesting because there was no system in place. Everything was decided on the spot. We came there on the principle that if we wanted to deliver results, we needed to be close to where the action was. If we were from where the action was, then our decision-making process would not be able to reflect the real situation on the ground. We cannot just coordinate from the sky. We need people on the ground — and those people will be ERAT.”

“So it is very important that Member States continue to train and deploy ERAT. And we will also need members who are not from Member States so that ERAT will have different sets of skills and perspectives, as well as to reflect the ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ strategy. Under the ERAT Transformation Plan, will have more people from the Member States and from other partners.”

ERAT TRANSFORMATION

In a future that is wrought with increasing disaster risks, ERAT’s transformation must be located within ASEAN’s broader aim to become a global leader in disaster management and emergency response by transforming the regional disaster management landscape. In the development of the AADMER Work Programme 2016-2020, the development of regional disaster response and coordination mechanisms, including ERAT, remains a priority strategy to realise the “One ASEAN, One Response” vision. The

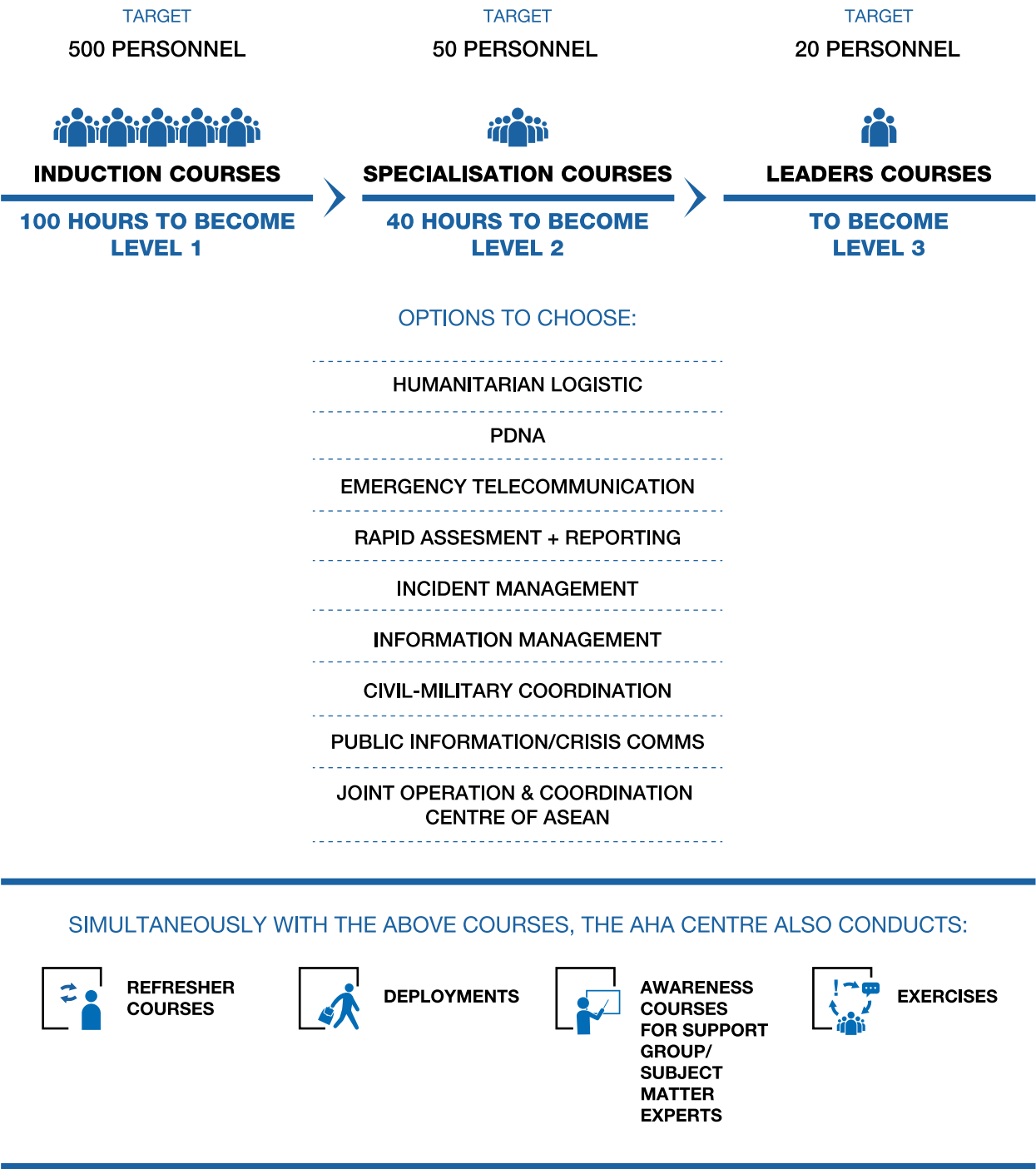
unified and collective regional response means that ASEAN is able to mobilise regional resources, capacities and assets, with contributions from Member States and partners. Under the new work programme, a strengthened ERAT is a key result under Priority Programme 6: Equip.

Guided by these strategic visions, and from the experiences in previous disasters, the ASEAN-ERAT Transformation Plan was developed to meet the expanding challenges of responding to natural disasters in the region. It was approved during the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ACDM Working Group on Preparedness and Response in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2015. The plan envisions the creation of “a reliable, credible, effective and competent emergency response and assessment team in the region”.

By this, it is envisioned that by 2020, the ASEAN-ERAT system will be strengthened to facilitate and coordinate ASEAN efforts in responding to natural disasters and to support affected countries’ NDMOs in post-disaster needs assessments. The ASEAN-ERAT system will also be enhanced through the continued conduct of induction courses, participation in disaster simulation exercises in the region and at the country level, and in deployments in real emergencies within and outside the region. Other aspects of strengthening ERAT include developing a contingency fund for emergency evacuation; the development of safety and security guidelines; and an enhancement of ERAT’s self-sufficiency through operational support equipment and mission kits.

The core strategies to enhance the ERAT system focus on developing at least 50 ERAT members per country, and developing their competencies at three levels: The In-Country Team (Level 1), Regional Team (Level 2), and ERAT Leaders (Level 3). With broad membership per country and a targeted overall roster of 500 members, a Regional Team of 100 members will be developed with specialist expertise in various aspects of response operations, such as assessments and report generation, ICT, logistics, communications and working with media, and humanitarian coordination. This will enable ASEAN to deploy regional experts at a moment’s notice upon the request of the affected country. The ERAT Leaders will comprise the crème de la crème of the ERAT roster, able to provide strategic and tactical leadership during deployments.

It is also envisioned that ERAT members will play important roles in embedding ERAT within national emergency operations and disaster management systems. ERAT can lend technical assistance for the development of contingency plans and in planning disaster simulation exercises, while also participating in both regional- and country-level simulation exercises.



ERAT members will also play a key role in making countries more self-sufficient, able to do assessments within the country, and to deploy using inter-operable systems. Adelina Kamal said, “ERAT Level 1 should be like a supermarket, spread out everywhere, like 7-11, in all Member States, and from all stakeholders. By doing that, we will achieve the vision of ‘One ASEAN, One Response’”.

ERAT will continue to be a central pillar of the “One ASEAN, One Response” vision, as affirmed under the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response. It is one of the few operational tools endorsed by the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN.

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Heads of State/Government signed the Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response with a commitment on ERAT reflected in paragraph 12, point 6: “ENDORSE the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) as the official resource of ASEAN under AADMER, managed and coordinated by the AHA Centre, and as such, endeavour to mobilise ERAT member and provide resources for their deployment upon request by the AHA Centre”.

Affirming the role of ERAT, Ow Yong said, “I think they play a very important role, ASEAN-ERAT and the AHA Centre. I do not see disasters lessening. Natural and manmade disasters will be more and more serious. If ASEAN wants to act as one, we must have this common system to respond to those who are in need. And this must make a difference to the country. It’s like in a family mechanism that when I need help, this one will automatically help me. We must have a system that is able to meet the needs of the 10 countries. Of course, in the long-run, ASEAN-ERAT and ASEAN do not respond just within the region. ASEAN can make a difference to the world. We have to move, not within the region, but move further out.”

ACRONYMS

AADMER

ACDM  
ACE Programme  
ADInet  
ADMM  
ADPC  
AHA Centre

AHAC  
AJDRP  
AMMDM  
AMS  
APG  
ARDEX  
ARF  
ASEAN  
ASEAN-ERAT  
BNPB

COP  
CPR  
DELSA  
DMRS  
EOC  
ICCT  
ICS  
ICT

DEFINITIONS

ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response  
ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management  
AHA Centre Executive Programme  
ASEAN Disaster Information Network  
ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting  
Asia Disaster Preparedness Center  
ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management  
ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator  
ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan  
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management  
ASEAN Member States  
AADMER Partnership Group  
ASEAN Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercises  
ASEAN Regional Forum  
Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team  
Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (Indonesian National Authority for Disaster Management)  
Conference of the Parties  
Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Disaster Emergency Logistic System for ASEAN  
Disaster Monitoring and Response System  
Emergency Operations Centre  
In-Country Coordination Team  
Incident Command System  
Information and Communication Technology

ACRONYMS

JAIF  
JOCCA  
NADMA  
NDMO  
NFP  
OCHA  
PDC  
PRWG  
PSC  
SASOP

SCDF  
SMART  
UNHRD  
WFP  
WHO

DEFINITIONS

Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund  
Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN  
Malaysia’s National Disaster Management Agency  
National Disaster Management Organisation  
National Focal Point  
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
Pacific Disaster Center  
Preparedness and Response Working Group  
Project Steering Committee  
Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations  
Singapore’s Civil Defence Force  
Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team  
United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot  
World Food Programme  
World Health Organisation





ONE **ASEAN**  
ONE **RESPONSE**

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**ONE ASEAN ONE RESPONSE**