



CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT & HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

2ND ASIA-PACIFIC CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS FORUM

3-5 OCTOBER 2017 | KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Overview

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Asia-Pacific Regional Office jointly hosted a civil-military relations forum themed “Sharing Perspectives and Best Practice towards enhanced Preparedness and Response.” The meeting drew nearly 100 participants from 30 countries, representing 50 organizations. The Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement constitutes the largest global humanitarian network, composed of almost 100 million staff, volunteers and supporters.

Major Conclusions

- **Shared space:** Recognition that during disaster response, the humanitarian community and assisting state militaries occupy a shared space, with the military providing support to humanitarian action to save lives and alleviate human suffering.
- **Engagement:** The humanitarian community and military actors must routinely engage to develop a clear understanding of each other’s challenges, roles, responsibilities and relationships to both improve disaster response and preserve humanitarian space.
- **Operationalization:** The Forum acknowledged the importance of “operationalizing” existing policy frameworks for disaster response, and that the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence must remain paramount.
- **Challenges:** Understanding respective roles and mandates; last resort versus first response; blurring of the lines between humanitarian and military action; tensions between humanitarian action and CIMIC; common understanding of humanitarian space.

CFE-DM Role

CFE-DM leadership addressed the forum on best practices in training and education aimed at bridging the civ-mil divide, as well as updated participants on the various disaster response coordination frameworks at play in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. CFE-DM representatives also served as facilitators for working groups focused on preparedness; response; and conflict (see below).

Attesting to the critical role the RCRC Movement plays in disaster preparedness and response, the Directors of CFE-DM and the IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office signed a memorandum of understanding guiding their partnership for 2017-2018.

Armed Forces Participants:

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Canada
- China
- Indonesia
- Nepal
- Philippines
- United States

National Societies

- Australia
- Canada
- Denmark
- Fiji
- Finland
- Italy
- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Thailand
- Republic of Korea
- United Kingdom

IFRC

- Kuala Lumpur Regional Office
- Americas Region
- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Thailand

ICRC

- Geneva Headquarters
- Lao PDR
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines

International Organizations:

- AHA Centre
- UNOCHA
- WFP

NGOs:

- Doctors Without Borders
- MERCY Malaysia
- Save the Children

Development / Cooperation:

- ACOM
- ECHO
- USAID/OFDA



Working Group 1 - Preparedness

In an effort to achieve a clear understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities and unique challenges, the preparedness working group called for military and humanitarian stakeholders to routinely connect with one another in a sustained, robust dialogue. The group identified a need for capacity building of National Societies, empowering them to better engage with both national disaster management organizations (NDMOs) and their own militaries. The RCRC Movement in Asia Pacific highlighted its intent to train a network of civil-military relations (CMR) focal points within National Societies, develop a CMR handbook for use by Movement Components, and embark on increased participation in existing military training and exercises.

Working Group 2 - Response

In order to provide for the most rapid and effective delivery of humanitarian relief in a manner that preserves and protects humanitarian space, the response working group called for increased information sharing, greater engagement with civilian NDMOs and the military, and underscored the need for a principled, yet pragmatic approach. Working group members acknowledged the context specificity of response and the broader humanitarian community's responsibility in ensuring an understanding of the humanitarian space on the part of the military, while at the same time coming to better understand political-military imperatives.

Working Group 3 - Conflict

The WG underscored the risks created by an erosion of the humanitarian space and a blurring of the lines between humanitarian and military actors in the context of complex emergencies. In mitigating this risk, the conflict working group stressed the need to maintain dialogue in order to enable prioritization and protection of affected communities and the safety and security of humanitarian actors. Working group members underscored the need for a common understanding of the environment, continuous analysis, and the importance of adapting approaches as conflicts inevitably evolve.

