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A Primer

HA/DR GUIDELINES FOR THE BAY OF BENGAL

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Introduction

This primer was developed for the purpose of the IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD Track 1.5 Policy Implementation Workshop on HA/DR in the Bay of Bengal held on 24-25 October 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand. It is intended as a turnkey document that summarises the primary set of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) guidelines applicable to the Bay of Bengal as a subset of the Indian Ocean Region. The primer is therefore a collation of best practices on HA/DR preparedness, response, and recovery as outlined in these guidelines. It covers the Hyogo Framework; Sendai Framework; SAARC Comprehensive Framework; ASEAN Agreement; and BIMSTEC Guidelines.

Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015

- Objectives:
 - Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation
 - Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning (EW)
 - Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
 - Reduce the underlying risk factors
 - Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.
- To that end, the HFA promoted regional programmes for technical cooperation, capacity development, assessment standards, hazard/vulnerability monitoring, information sharing, and effective resource mobilisation.
- The HFA also identified specific critical tasks for regional organisations, such as:
 - Conducting regional and sub-regional baseline assessments of the disaster risk reduction (DRR) status
 - Establishing or strengthening existing specialised regional collaborative centres, to undertake DRR research, training, education, and capacity building
 - Supporting the development of regional mechanisms and capacities for early warning systems
 - Compiling and standardising statistical information on regional disaster risks, impacts, and losses
 - Analysing emerging issues that might increase vulnerabilities or risk the capacity of authorities and communities to respond to disasters
 - Developing local-to-international level directories, inventories, and information-sharing services on best DRR practices and technologies
 - Strengthening techno-scientific capacities to develop models to assess the impact of geological, weather, water and climate-related hazards.
- To meet the above objectives, the HFA set out to support states by:
 - Providing appropriate, timely, and well-coordinated international relief assistance

- ▀ Ensuring effective arrangements for international cooperation in urban search and rescue (SAR)
- ▀ Strengthening international mechanisms that support disaster-stricken states in the transition phase towards sustainable physical, social, and economic recovery
- ▀ Adapting the existing inter-agency disaster management training programme based on a shared, inter-agency strategic vision and framework
- ▀ Developing partnerships to implement schemes increases financing for post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation (as well as encouraging a culture of insurance in developing countries).

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk

Reduction (SF) 2015-2030

- The SF operates at multiple levels. At the regional level, it identifies the following priorities:
 - ▀ Enhancing the development of science-based methodologies to record disaster losses, disaster risk (DR) modelling, and multi-hazard EW systems
 - ▀ Promoting the conduct of comprehensive surveys on multi-hazard DRs and the development of regional DR assessments (including climate change scenarios)
 - ▀ Enhancing international cooperation on technology transfers and access

to/sharing of non-sensitive data

- ▀ Promoting transboundary cooperation to enable the planning of ecosystem-based approaches about shared resources and risks (including epidemics and displacement)
- ▀ Supporting regional cooperation to deal with disaster preparedness through joint exercises and drills
- ▀ Advancing regional protocols to facilitate the sharing of response capacities and resources during and after disasters
- ▀ Strengthening coordinated regional approaches and mechanisms to prepare for effective disaster response in situations that exceed national capacities
- ▀ Promoting the development and dissemination of standards, codes, and operational guides to support coordinated action in disaster preparedness and response
- ▀ Facilitating information sharing on lessons learned and best practices for policy practice and post-disaster reconstruction programmes.
- The SF notes that disasters have demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to “Build Back Better” by integrating DRR into development measures.

SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management (SDM)

- The SDM's objectives are to:
 - Strengthen the regional disaster management system to reduce risks and improve response/recovery management at all levels
 - Facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt from DRR efforts at the national level
 - Establish a regional system of information exchange on prevention, preparedness and management of natural disasters
 - Establish, strengthen, and improve regional EW systems.
- To this end, the SDM recommends:
 - Development systems and procedures to establish an effective Community Alerting System (CAS)
 - Development and standardisation of damage, loss, and impact assessment methodologies and relief management procedures
 - Creation of a regional response mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief, and rehabilitation
 - Establishment and improvement of SAR mechanisms
 - Establishment of a post-disaster recovery and reconstruction mechanism.

ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)

- The AADMER's objectives are to:
 - Provide effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and social, economic, and environmental assets
 - Jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.
- AADMER addresses various issues in the DRR domain, such as:
 - AHA Centre: To promote regional cooperation, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) will be established in cooperation and coordination with the Parties
 - Risk identification and monitoring: AHA Centre will collect, analyse, and share data on regional risks and their potential impact
 - Disaster early warning: Parties will work together to monitor hazards with cross-border effects, exchange information, and provide early warnings
 - Preparedness: Parties will develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for regional cooperation and national actions and regularly update the AHA Centre on available resources for emergency response. The AHA Centre will oversee regional standby arrangements and periodically review

regional SOPs

- ▀ ASEAN standby arrangements for disaster relief and emergency response: Each Party will designate assets and capacities, including SAR directories, emergency stockpiles, and military and civilian resources. These will be shared with the AHA Centre and other Parties and used through a network of designated areas
- ▀ Joint emergency response through the provision of assistance: Parties may request assistance from others directly or through the AHA Centre in a disaster. Responding States will identify military and civilian resources available for assistance and inform the AHA Centre
- ▀ Direction and control of assistance: The Party receiving assistance will have complete control of coordination and supervision of the aid within its territory
- ▀ Respect of national laws and regulations: Assisting parties must respect and comply with the national laws of the country receiving assistance and the objectives of the AADMER
- ▀ Rehabilitation: Parties will develop strategies, implement programmes and promote bilateral, regional, and international cooperation for rehabilitation.

BIMSTEC Guidelines for Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- The Guidelines' objectives are to:
 - ▀ Provide a framework to coordinate HADR operations in the maritime domain in response to natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal region
 - ▀ Establish a common understanding among Member States for conducting such operations.
- The Guidelines outline the processes for providing HADR by one or more Member States to another, explicitly addressing the maritime domain
- The Guidelines call for all available resources, including military assets, to be employed to minimise human suffering during natural disasters. It does not include reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, focusing instead on immediate relief
- Key humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence underpin the Guidelines. To enhance capacity building for disaster preparedness, the Guidelines direct Member States to:
 - ▀ Identify risks and assign them with hazard levels
 - ▀ Develop response strategies with clear SOPs for mobilising and coordinating relief efforts
 - ▀ Strengthen local and national disaster management by establishing early warning systems and maintaining dedicated assets and stockpiles
 - ▀ Conduct regular training, mock drills, and

maintain a resource directory to ensure readiness.

- For disaster-resilient infrastructure, the Guidelines recommend that Member States:
 - Assess risks to infrastructure and create governance frameworks for integrating resilience into planning, and enforce updated standards
 - Encourage the use of advanced technologies like GIS and drones along with innovative financing solutions such as public-private partnerships
 - Engage communities and develop mechanisms for recovery and reconstruction.
- The Guidelines outline the responsibilities for a disaster-affected nation. They are:
 - Provide timely information on the disaster's nature and magnitude
 - Specify the type and scope of assistance required
 - Exercise overall direction, control, and coordination of relief efforts within its territory
 - Grant exemptions on taxes and duties for imported relief equipment and materials
 - Offer local facilities and services to the assisting nation's contingent
 - Ensure the security of personnel, equipment, and materials brought in by the assisting nation
 - Establish a Coordination Centre in disaster-affected areas to manage the employment of maritime forces
 - Notify the assisting nation when relief

operations are to cease and facilitate withdrawal.

- The Guidelines outline the responsibilities of an assisting nation. They are:
 - Respect the national laws and regulations of the affected nation
 - Provide details of all assets employed in relief operations before entering the affected nation's territory
 - Coordinate disaster response with the affected nation's disaster management authorities
 - Be self-sustaining throughout the relief mission to avoid straining local resources
 - Cease relief operations and withdraw upon notification from the affected nation.
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Further Reading:

- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). 2005. Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. Extract from the final report of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (A/CONF.206/6).
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- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). 2025. BIMSTEC Guidelines for Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. Formalised at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, Bangkok, Thailand, April 4.

