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BOLSTERING ASEAN'S PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS FOR NATURAL DISASTERS



Photo credit: Sara Lehman

Southeast Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Over the past decade alone, the region has seen massive earthquakes off the coast of Indonesia, major flooding across Thailand, and disastrous typhoons in the Philippines. As urban areas rapidly expand and as ASEAN integration creates more vigorous cross-border linkages, natural disasters in the individual member states will continue to have a greater regional impact.

To serve a disaster management coordinating mechanism within the region, ASEAN Member States created the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), which committed member states to combine resources and jointly undertake disaster preparedness and response efforts to minimize loss of life and damages in the region. The AHA Centre actively facilitates regional cooperation when disaster strikes, coordinating regional disaster relief and emergency operations and serving as a key repository of data on regional assets.

Through the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (PROGRESS) project, the U.S. Government is supporting ASEAN and the AHA Centre in efforts to mitigate loss from natural disasters. Over the next four years, PROGRESS will support the following initiatives:

- **Standardization of disaster management training** – PROGRESS will help ASEAN standardize disaster management training across the region, ensuring consistent technical knowledge and tools are shared to prepare for and respond to natural disasters.
- **Development of guidelines for Risk Vulnerability Assessments (RVA)** – Technical assistance will be given to develop guidelines for conducting risk and vulnerability assessments, an important tool for identifying the vulnerabilities in areas threatened by natural disasters and for prioritizing preparedness measures for both populations and economic assets.
- **Improve and upgrade the AHA Centre's disaster monitoring and response system (DMRS)** – Assistance will be provided to collect better, more comprehensive meteorological, seismic and demographic data, and monitor disasters in real-time.
- **Facilitate private sector partnerships** – Working closely with the AHA Centre, PROGRESS will leverage the expertise, resources, and networks of private sector companies to provide innovative ideas for improving management and mitigation of damages from natural disaster.

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