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

In our **Feature Article**, Ms Caroline Wigado discusses the 9th ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (SPDDM) which recently took place in Singapore.

This issue's **On the Ground** features some of the initiatives and projects including relief and fundraising efforts that Singapore-based humanitarian organisations - Airlink, Singapore Red Cross - have undertaken as part of their response to humanitarian crises such as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the earthquakes in Herat, Afghanistan. It also features a snapshot of the now-monthly gatherings of the Singapore Humanitarian Network (SHN).

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

**In the Spotlight** features the upcoming Humanitarian Futures Forum.

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



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# REFLECTIONS ON THE ASEAN STRATEGIC POLICY DIALOGUE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT 2024

By **Caroline Wigado**,

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The 9th ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (SPDDM) was held on 23 August 2024 in Singapore in conjunction with the World Humanitarian Day earlier that week. The overarching theme was “It Takes a Village: Inclusive Approaches to Enhance Disaster Resilience” and placed emphasis on the importance of engaging the community to enhance disaster resilience in Southeast Asia through a multifaceted approach.

The SPDDM 2024 opened with Welcome Remarks by the Guest of Honor, Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister of Digital Development and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs of Singapore. The opening session was followed by remarks by H.E. Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ahmaddin bin Haji Abdul Rahman, the Minister of Home Affairs of Brunei Darussalam as the Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management, H.E. Dr Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN; as well as H.E. Sujiro Seam, Ambassador of the European Union to ASEAN.

The dialogue session kicked-off with the ASEAN-UN Dialogue inviting Dr Raditya Jati, Deputy Minister for System and Strategy of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) Indonesia, and Mr Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief of Office of UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as the panel. The session, moderated by Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, the Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), highlighted in-depth sharing on the interoperability of the global and regional mechanisms on disaster management, guided by the ASEAN-UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action

on Disaster Management as well as the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Sustainable Resilience and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction as the guiding frameworks.

The session continued with a High-Level Panel Discussion with the sub-theme of “Local Insights for Global Impact: Zooming in on Community-Led Disaster Solutions”. Moderated by Mr Ling Young Ern, the Deputy Commissioner for Operations and Resilience of the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), the panel included Dr Bhichit Rattakul, President of Thai Network for Disaster Resilience; Ambassador Benjamin Jeyaraj Williams, Secretary General of Singapore Red Cross; Mr Brendan Moon, AM, Coordinator-General of the National Emergency Management Agency of Australia; and Ms Hang Thi Thanh Pham, Senior Resilience Officer of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The discussion highlighted the shifted focus from macro, top-down strategies to bottom-up approaches, exploring the empowerment of local communities to enhance their disaster resilience through grassroots efforts.

In the Thematic Session on “From Risk to Resilience: Empowering Vulnerable Groups in Disaster Management”, the speakers ventured into exploring inclusive strategies and collaborative approaches to enhance the effectiveness of resilience-building initiatives, by considering the pivotal roles of youth-led and vulnerable groups engagement throughout the initiatives. Moderated by Ms Adelina Kamal, Senior Advisor to Nexus Resilience Group, the speakers including Asec Bernardo Rafaelito

R. Alejandro IV, the Deputy Administrator for Administration and Education of the Office of Civil Defense of the Philippines; Ms Debora Dian Utami Nugraheni, the Director of YAKKUM Emergency Unit; and Dr Iffah Farhana, the Vice Secretary-General of U-INSPIRE Alliance.

The dialogue closed with a discussion on how technology, including the use of Artificial Intelligence, could act as a catalyst for sustainable development in the aftermath of disasters, thereby fostering long-term resilience. This second Thematic Session on “Utilising Technology to Achieve Sustainable Resilience” was moderated by Mr Said Faisal, CEO of Nexus Resilience group, with the speakers including Dr Monique Kuglitsch, Innovation Manager at Fraunhofer HHI and Chair of the ITU/WMO/UNEP Focus Group on AI for Natural Disaster Management; and Dr Sanjay Srivastava, Chief of Disaster Risk Reduction, Information, and Communications Technology, and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of UNESCAP.

The dialogue concluded with Closing Remarks by Col. (Ret) Muhammad Harrih Radshidi bin Haji Muhammad Jamin, Director of National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC) Brunei Darussalam and Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). Attended by more than 200 participants, the SPDDM 2024 was successfully co-organised by the SCDF, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the AHA Centre and supported by the European Union as funding partner as well as RSIS and Nexus Resilience Group as knowledge partners.

# ON THE GROUND

## Insights from the 2024 Airlink APAC Logistics Preparedness Workshop

In March 2024, Airlink hosted its second annual Asia & the Pacific Logistics Preparedness Workshop. This year, we held the training in Taiwan, gathering regional experts from NGOs, coordinating agencies, and logistics partners. The event aimed to foster collaboration, share insights, and build capacity for rapid disaster response in a region prone to natural disasters.

### Enhancing Regional Coordination

The workshop is rooted in Airlink's Regional Response Framework, which emphasizes the importance of preparedness and coordination among humanitarian actors. Asia and the Pacific present unique challenges due to the diversity and geographic dispersion, making collaboration essential. By bringing together key players in the humanitarian sector, the workshop facilitated the sharing of best practices, enabling organizations to navigate the complexities of disaster logistics better. Importantly, new connections were made to forge more collaboration ahead.

Taiwan was chosen as the host location due to its communities' deep understanding of resilience, given their frequent exposure to cyclones, earthquakes, and monsoons. This setting provided an ideal backdrop for discussing the region's specific needs and developing tailored strategies for humanitarian response. (In fact, shortly after we left, the Hualien earthquake occurred and demonstrated the resilience of our local partner, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, and reinforced lessons just newly learned on structuring a rapid response.)

**Key Learning Objectives and Outcomes**  
The workshop focused on enhancing logistical preparedness, particularly in transporting humanitarian supplies and personnel. Interactive sessions allowed participants to explore lessons learned from past responses and identify areas for improvement. A significant highlight was the session on Airlink's Air Logistics Preparedness Guidance Note, a ten-step guide designed to help NGOs prepare for emergency aid shipments, including the often complex documentation required for cargo movement. Participants also discussed best practices for deploying humanitarian responders and supporting



Photo credit: Asia & the Pacific - Airlink

their mental health, a critical aspect of effective disaster response. We emphasized the importance of developing strong, formalized partnerships with local organizations and communities to ensure aid is appropriate to local needs and supports local economies rather than disrupting them.

### Successes, Challenges, and the Path Forward

One of the workshop's successes was the deepened collaboration among participants, which highlighted the potential for joint funding and the benefits of formalizing partnerships before disasters strike. However, challenges remain, particularly in avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring efficient communication during emergencies. Many NGOs recognized the need for better information sharing and collaboration to overcome these challenges.

The workshop also underscored the importance of local procurement as a means of supporting regional economies during disasters. By developing procurement guidelines that balance local and international sourcing, organizations can mitigate the negative economic impacts of flooding local markets with imported goods. This approach supports local businesses and helps stabilize prices, ensuring a more sustainable response.

(Subsequent to the workshop, Airlink joined the inaugural Asia Pacific Humanitarian Logistics Working Group led by the World Food Program in response to regional partners seeking a strategic joint approach to the logistics of humanitarian aid through information sharing and coordination.) Looking ahead, participants of the Airlink

training workshop agreed on several action points to enhance preparedness and response efforts. These include ongoing training for staff and volunteers, improving documentation and impact reporting, and increasing supplies' pre-position in disaster-prone areas. There was a strong emphasis on the need for NGOs to build relationships with local partners during non-disaster periods, enabling more effective and culturally sensitive responses when crises occur.

### A Collaborative Vision for the Future

The workshop concluded with a call for greater collaboration and information sharing within the humanitarian sector. Participants expressed a desire for Airlink to coordinate in disseminating vital information and managing logistics, particularly in customs clearance and last-mile transportation. By continuing to foster these partnerships and enhance communication, the humanitarian community can better prepare for and respond to the increasing frequency and severity of disasters in the Asia and Pacific region.

The 2024 APAC Logistics Preparedness Workshop was crucial to building a more resilient and collaborative humanitarian response network. The lessons learned and connections made during this event will contribute to more effective and coordinated efforts in future crises, ultimately saving lives and supporting communities in their time of need.

By **Jenny Torner**, Humanitarian Programs Manager & **Claire Leow**, Airlink's Regional Representative, Asia & the Pacific -Airlink

## Singapore Red Cross Response to Sri Lanka Floods

In response to the ongoing floods in Sri Lanka, the Singapore Red Cross (SRC) contributed SGD50,000 in humanitarian aid. SRC also mobilised a team of one staff and four volunteers to Colombo, Sri Lanka to support the relief and recovery operations of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) from 21 to 27 June.

The monetary contribution supported the SLRCS in delivering immediate relief, such as providing safe drinking water, immediate first aid assistance, and non-food items to families displaced by the floods. It also supported the SLRCS in organising clean-up initiatives to clear flood-water-stacked places and drainages, to mitigate the risk of dengue and organised medical camps in flood-affected areas.

Trained in SRC's Overseas Disaster Deployment Training, the SRC team conducted needs assessments for the affected communities, assisted in medical



Photo Credit: Singapore Red Cross

camp and distributed non-food items to displaced communities. With the possible severity of a dengue outbreak, the team conducted house-to-house surveillance campaigns in selected zones to eliminate mosquito breeding sites. The monetary contribution will also be utilised for dengue prevention campaigns in schools and to

conduct dengue outbreak control training for volunteers to prepare them for potential dengue outbreaks in communities.

Click [here](#) to watch the story of one child survivor.

Contributed by Singapore Red Cross

## Singapore Red Cross Delivers Third Tranche of Support for Affected Communities in Gaza

In April, the SRC delivered its third tranche of support valued at USD600,000 to assist affected communities amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The SRC collaborated with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERC) to:

- **Provide vital food support** (USD\$400,000) through the Emergency Humanitarian Kitchen and delivery of food parcels. Located in North Sinai, the Emergency Humanitarian Kitchen provides daily hot meals for at least 7,000 displaced families and medical evacuees in temporary shelters run by the ERC, in the first phase. The proximity of North Sinai to the borders of Gaza reduces logistical challenges and facilitates prompt delivery of warm meals for the affected. On top of that, SRC procured supplies for food parcels, containing basic food items like rice, pasta, flour, salt, oil, tuna, tomato paste, biscuits and jam. The food parcels were transported into Gaza and supported more than 9,000 families for five to seven days. SRC worked closely with the ERC to procure these food items directly from suppliers in Egypt.
- **Procure medical supplies for hospitals in Gaza** (USD\$200,000), which includes medical consumables such as first aid items, blood pressure



Photo Credit: Singapore Red Cross

monitors, pulse oximeters, finger splints, nebulizer sets and other urgently needed medical items requested by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and hospitals in Gaza. Due to the high demand for certain medical supplies in Egypt, the SRC procured them in Singapore and delivered them directly to Egypt. This was subsequently transported to Gaza where the PRCS distributed them to hospitals in Gaza.

- **Bolster ERC's relief operations with the deployment of SRC volunteers.** An operations coordinator was stationed in Egypt for approximately two months to oversee the coordination of SRC's response activities. This was the second long-term deployment the SRC activated in Egypt to ensure the seamless

coordination of humanitarian response efforts. The first long-term deployment was carried out last year from October to November, where an SRC staff was deployed to coordinate SRC's first tranche of support worth USD 200,000. The operations coordinator for the second deployment monitored and shared the latest updates, which shaped future response activities, and coordinated the short-term deployment of eight SRC volunteers from 22 to 28 April. The team sourced food supplies and packed the food parcels, and other relief items destined for Gaza. SRC will continue to work with our Red Cross Red Crescent partners to deliver timely humanitarian assistance to affected communities in Gaza.

Contributed by Singapore Red Cross

## Singapore Humanitarian Network Monthly Catch-Ups at Holland Village

On Thursday, 4th June 2024, the Singapore Humanitarian Network held their first informal catch-up session at Holland Village in Singapore. It was an opportunity to bring together the humanitarian community in Singapore to meet others working in the field as well as those simply interested in humanitarian affairs. Since then, colleagues and friends working in the various organisations, agencies and inter-agency networks of the humanitarian system have taken the opportunity to show up month-after-month to eat, drink and chat with each other, sharing their experiences and lives. For those interested to join these sessions, they will be taking place on the 1st Thursday of each month.

For more information about this event, please contact S. Nanthini at [isnanthini@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:isnanthini@ntu.edu.sg).



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

### News Articles, Commentaries and Reports

#### **Saving Lives at Sea in Southeast Asia – Is a Course Correction Possible?**

*Alistair D.B Cook  
IDSS Paper  
29 February 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **Humanitarian Diplomacy: A Tool to Rebuild Trust in the Humanitarian Sector**

*S. Nanthini  
22 March 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **The challenges of the increasing institutionalization of climate security**

*Judith N. Hardt, Dhanasree Jayaram, Cameron Harrington, Duncan McLaren, Nicholas P. Simpson, Alistair D. B. Cook, Maria Cecilia Oliveira, Franziskus von Lucke, Julia Maria Trombetta, Marwa Daoudy, Rita Floyd, Chinwe Philomina Oramah, Mely Caballero Anthony and Adrien Estève  
PLOS Climate  
25 April 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **Space Technology for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in ASEAN**

*Keith Paolo Catibog Landicho  
IDSS Paper  
3 May 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **Social Innovation by Young People for Climate Change Solutions which Address Drivers of Migration and Displacement in the Global South**

*Jeyda Simren Sekhon Atac and Megha Saha  
International Organization for Migration  
5 June 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **Regional Humanitarian Bulletin: January – June | Rohingya & Other Refugees from Myanmar**

*Médecins Sans Frontières  
July 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more."

#### **Military Humanitarianism in Southeast Asia: Through a Women, Peace and Security Lens**

*S. Nanthini  
NTS Insight  
August 2024*

Click [here](#) to read more.

### Journal Articles / Chapters

#### **"Humanitarian action in the Asia-Pacific during COVID-19: new challenges, modalities, and cooperation". Journal of Asian Public Policy, 17(2), 181–195, 2024**

*Alistair D.B Cook and Christopher Chen*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **"Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Security Architecture – the Case of ASEAN." Third World Quarterly, August, 1–23. doi:10.1080/01436597.2024.2388291.**

*Alistair D.B Cook*

Click [here](#) to read more.

#### **"Lava flow impacts on the built environment: insights from a new global dataset". Journal of Applied Volcanology. 13(1). 2024. doi: 1186/s13617-023-00140-7.**

*Elinor Meredith, Susanne Jenkins, Josh Hayes, David Lallemand, Natalia Deligne and Natalie Teng.*

Click [here](#) to read more.



## Humanitarian Futures Forum 2024

Crises in the next decade and the longer future are predicted to grow significantly in magnitude and frequency and aggravated by climatic, technological, socio-economic and geopolitical factors at regional and global levels. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly widened the gap between humanitarian needs and aid and presents a powerful example. Such possibilities give rise to the need to transform humanitarian action.

Apart from addressing immediate humanitarian concerns and drawing lessons from past experience, humanitarian futures calls for an anticipatory and adaptive approach to preparing for future scenarios. This will likely see the concurrence or interface of different types of hazards at higher intensity and frequency. Organisations with humanitarian roles and responsibilities will need to develop new mindsets, expertise, capacities, and partnerships to deal with the future crises.

As the region and wider world strives to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the HADR programme, NTS Centre, RSIS and the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre will jointly host the Humanitarian Futures Forum from 29th —30th October 2024 to strengthen support systems for policy planners and decision-makers on ways to better prepare for and respond to humanitarian challenges in this decade and beyond.

The forum will consist of a keynote address and three panel sessions. Each panel session will have four to five speakers to talk on a selected topic. Session one will explore Humanitarian Impacts of the Climate Crisis. Session two will discuss the role of Digital Humanitarianism. Session three focuses on Emerging Humanitarian Landscape.

The successor to a series of events focused on humanitarian futures held during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 3rd Humanitarian Futures Forum brings together local and overseas participants from the military, government agencies, think tanks and academia, private sector, philanthropy, local civil society, regional organisations, International NGOs and International Organisations, and media. The forum aims to facilitate the participating organisations to review their experiences in humanitarian settings and share perspectives. It seeks to inform humanitarian preparedness, planning and response to crises in our immediate and long-term future. With representatives from various backgrounds, the forum will provide participants with opportunities for broad engagement, discussion, shared expertise and networking, leading to the cross-fertilisation of ideas and strengthening collaboration in the humanitarian sector and with partners.

More details are available [here](#).

