

Chapter Five

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Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management and Health Security: APEC and Comprehensive Regional Strategy

Executive Summary

- Human security challenges arising from natural disasters, disease and inadequate food resources negatively impact economic development in the Asia-Pacific region, home to more than 50 percent of the world's population.
- To mitigate economic and human impacts of disasters, nations must commit greater resources to capacity development and enlist the cooperation of the whole of society.
- Multilateral regional organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) have significant roles to play in advancing disaster-management and health-security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The challenge lies in integrating policy frameworks and mechanisms that have been developed independently by these organizations into a comprehensive, regional strategy to enhance the interoperability in a crisis risk reduction, mitigation, and response.

Introduction

Global security challenges will increasingly exacerbate economic devastation in future disasters. To mitigate economic and human impacts of natural disasters, nations must commit greater resources to capacity development and enlist the cooperation of the whole of society. Multilateral and regional organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) have significant roles to play in advancing disaster coopera-

tion in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the challenge lies in integrating policy frameworks and mechanisms that have been developed independently by these organizations into a comprehensive regional strategy, to enhance interoperability in disaster risk reduction, mitigation and response. This chapter assesses the current integration status of the APEC and ASEAN organizational disaster frameworks and highlights areas for further cooperation to achieve more optimized disaster-management capabilities and resource utilization among nations in the Asia-Pacific region. As good public health also underpins economic development, the chapter critically assesses challenges and opportunities for cooperation on human health security between APEC and regional organizations.

Disaster Management

The Asia-Pacific region experiences more than 70 percent of the world's natural disasters annually.¹ Research suggests that the intensity and frequency of disasters in the region will continue to result in greater human and economic damage. Trends such as global climate change and sea-level rise, poverty within a rapid urban development setting, integrated economies, and faster population growth will leave communities more exposed and vulnerable to disaster hazards. Greater exposure to disasters can profoundly delay or reverse a country's economic progress and growth, as demonstrated by the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster, which resulted in more than 19,000 people dead or missing and cost Japan \$210 billion, or 4 percent of its gross domestic product.² Second only to Japan's loss, Hurricane Katrina cost the United States more than 1,800 lives and more than \$110 billion.³

¹ Continuity Central (2011), APEC Countries Agree on the Need to Promote Business Continuity, available online at: <http://www.continuitycentral.com/news05863.html>.

² "Natural disasters: Counting the Cost of Calamities," *The Economist* (March 14, 2012), available online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21542755>.

³ B. Kurpis (2012), "Hurricane Katrina Relief," available online at: <http://www.hurricanekatrinarelief.com>.

Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management

Regardless of whether countries suffer economic or human costs, disasters will continue to require greater regional cooperation and demand more resources. A whole-of-society approach, involving comprehensive strategies, initiatives, and mechanisms developed within the frameworks of regional organizations, will prove an invaluable way for nations to collectively share information, knowledge, and resources. The APEC Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG), first established as APEC's Task Force for Emergency Preparedness (TFEP) by APEC senior officials in 2005, brings together the largest annual gathering of heads of emergency management agencies in the region to help APEC's 21 member economies better prepare for and respond to disasters.⁴ Since then, the EPWG has been proactively coordinating activities among its members' states. Significantly, APEC developed the Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Asia-Pacific Region 2009, a framework for APEC's current and future emergency preparedness activities, and reaffirmed commitments to support the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Hyogo Framework for Action guidelines to strengthen the international system for disaster risk reduction. APEC conducted a host of workshops, dialogues, study courses and initiatives to address public private partnerships and coordination. Additionally, the EPWG established fourteen principles for public private partnerships and disaster resilience.⁵

The EPWG's extensive disaster related activities undertaken thus far repeatedly stressed the importance of regional cooperation among its members and internal coordination with various APEC groups, task forces, and forums. The EPWG also partnered

⁴ APEC (2012), *Emergency Preparedness*, available online at: <http://www.apec.org/Groups/SOM-Steering-Committee-on-Economic-and-Technical-CooperationWorking-Groups/Emergency-Preparedness.aspx>.

⁵ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2010), "Protecting Development Gains: Reducing Disaster Vulnerability and Building Resilience in Asia and the Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, available online at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/62388194/2010-Asia-Pacific-Disaster-Report-APDR-Protecting-Development-Gains>.

with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations such as ASEAN, PIF, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that are working to reduce disaster risk. This need for partnership was again emphasized in the 2011 APEC Seniors Disaster Management Officials Forum Outcomes Report. The report recommended that UNISDR's Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) consider enhanced regional cooperation and collaboration, and suggested that APEC, ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) be assessed for opportunities for greater integration of regional disaster management strategies and initiatives. One method suggested linking websites and institutionalizing information exchanges between the EPWG and the ARF International Meeting of Disaster Relief (ISM-DR). The report specifically highlighted to ministers and leaders the potential for synergy between APEC and the ARF in emergency response to maintain momentum on regional cooperation and obtain political direction for greater collaboration.

Much like APEC, ASEAN and ARF also sought to align their strategic visions and objectives with the UNISDR Hyogo Framework for Action in order to more effectively guide member states' national policies and programs to address disaster risk reduction. After the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami, ASEAN nations signed the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in July 2005 and ratified it into effect in 2009. Since then, ASEAN has put in place measures to implement many provisions of the agreement. Under the oversight of a specialized ASEAN body called the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), standard operating procedures, training and capacity building, disaster information sharing and communication networks, and rapid-assessment teams have been set up or put into practice.⁶ AADMER also provides for the

⁶ Association of South East Asian Nations, "Regional Disaster Management Agreement Enters into Force," (December 24, 2009), available online at: <http://www.ascansec.org/24136.htm>.

establishment of an ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to undertake operational coordination of activities under the agreement, with an official operation start date in June of 2012.⁷ Additionally, ASEAN annually works with the ARF nations to conduct annual table-top exercises and demonstrations to develop further interoperable disaster-response procedures.

Both APEC and ASEAN realize the need for more substantive action beyond regional expressions of cooperation. On June 11, 2009, a delegation headed by Ambassador Michael Tay, executive director of the APEC Secretariat, met with the secretary general of ASEAN, Surin Pitsuwan, and his staff to identify areas in which collaboration between APEC and ASEAN could generate genuine and practical benefits. In addition to the high-level meeting between Tay and Pitsuwan, staff from the two organizations also engaged to establish professional working relationships in specialty areas. Then again, in July 2011, APEC Ambassador Muhamed Noor, executive director of the APEC Secretariat, and Pitsuwan met in Jakarta to explore areas of mutual cooperation. Even with strong leadership and clear internal organizational intent, inter-organizational linkages have proven harder and slower to build. The robust disaster-management programs and activities developed individually within APEC and ASEAN are slow to integrate regionally because both organizations lack the resources and full organizational capacity to implement integration effectively. Beyond the EPWG co-chair observing the ASEAN ARF Disaster Relief Exercise in March 2011, and subsequently suggesting a study on how APEC and ARF processes for disaster cooperation can be synergized, a more practical step is to make resources available for actual synergies. Member states of ASEAN and member economies of APEC must be expected to increase annual contributions to respective secretariats and working groups to increase staff and

⁷ N. Osman, "ASEAN Disaster Center Opens Its Doors in Jakarta," *Jakarta Globe* (January 28, 2011), available online at: <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/indonesia/asean-disaster-center-opens-doors-in-jakarta/419449>.

professional capacity to do the required work to align APEC's and ASEAN's policies and programs. With added staff and resources, APEC and ASEAN can jointly explore and develop novel mechanisms for generating funding to invest in disaster prevention, create information- and skills-exchange capabilities, conduct relevant disaster-related research, and monitor programs between the two organizations. APEC, with its strength in private sector influence, can leverage powerful assets that ASEAN may not be in a position to exploit. APEC thereby can add real value by encouraging businesses to make greater investments in APEC's and ASEAN's institutional development, from which disaster management policies, frameworks, programs, and processes could be streamlined to increase convergence and avoid risks of duplication.

APEC and ASEAN could additionally improve cooperation by jointly employing disaster management personnel in key organizational positions. For example, it may be mutually beneficial for APEC and ASEAN to both fund positions at the ASEAN AHA center in Jakarta, with expectations to relay disaster information more effectively and facilitate communication between APEC and ASEAN secretariats in times of disasters. Similar positions could be established to coordinate annual joint exercises, participate in the ASEAN Emergency Response Assessment Teams (ERAT), and facilitate completion of ASEAN standard operating procedures and other ASEAN or APEC regional studies and programs currently in process, such as sourcing social media for more effective disaster management.

APEC and ASEAN do not lack the political will to improve regional cooperation. Both influential organizations must now create greater efficiencies by putting into action the recommendations to better synergize policies and frameworks and harmonize programs, mechanisms, and processes to avoid duplication of human resources and efforts. Increasing needed resources of both organizations to simultaneously build institutional and human capacities will go far toward improving cooperation and promoting

a comprehensive, whole-of-society disaster management approach in the Asia-Pacific region.

Health Security

Infectious diseases, natural and man-made disasters and environmental change all negatively impact the health of human populations worldwide, but they are especially challenging for vulnerable populations in many of the developing nations of the Asia-Pacific. These health security issues represent nontraditional regional and global security challenges.⁸

As the Asia-Pacific region is home to more than 50 percent of the world's population, true global health security depends to a large degree upon how successful this region is in developing and sustaining functional national and regional systems and capacities for managing emerging diseases and acute public-health events and emergencies. To this end, greater emphasis must be placed on preparedness-driven investments in health security.⁹ Although it is impossible to predict what, where, when and how new infectious diseases will emerge, we can be confident that emerging diseases and public health emergencies will continue to occur.¹⁰

Regional Cooperation on Health Security

In April 2002, health ministers of the ASEAN countries declared Healthy ASEAN 2020. A decade later, progress toward this vision has been uneven. Differences and inequality in economic and wealth

⁸ J. Campbell, "Human Health Threats and Implications for Regional Security in Southeast Asia, in: *Human Security: Securing East Asia's Future* (B.C.B. Teh, ed.), (Springer, New York, 2012).

⁹ A. Li, and T. Kasai, . "The Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases – A Strategy to Regional Health Security," *Western Pacific Surveillance and Response* (2011), J., 2(1):1, available online at: [http://www2.wpro.who.int/wpsar/archives/Archive_2\(1\)2011_PE_Li_Kasai.htm](http://www2.wpro.who.int/wpsar/archives/Archive_2(1)2011_PE_Li_Kasai.htm).

¹⁰ D. Morens, G. Folkers, and A. Fauci, "The Challenge of Emerging Infectious Diseases," (2004), *Nature* 430:242-249, available online at: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v430/n6996/full/nature02759.html>.

distribution undoubtedly have contributed to the increasing gap in health development among ASEAN countries; however, national disparities in progress are also due to variable adoption of technology, insufficient clean energy, corruption, poor governance, and unstable security. Because of their physical proximity and porous borders, ASEAN countries are challenged by transnational health threats from infectious diseases with pandemic potential, which frequently originate in Southeast Asia and constitute major public health threats requiring regional cooperation.

At several of its annual meetings, APEC has supported initiatives related to health, including the APEC Action Plan on SARS (Severe Adult Respiratory Syndrome), the Health Security Initiative (Bangkok 2003), and a leaders' agreement to confront pandemic health threats (Busan 2005). The motivation for both of these agreements was fundamentally economics, after the stunning recognition that the SARS epidemic in 2003 cost Hong Kong 6 percent of its GDP in three months. The SARS epidemic highlighted the need for more effective and coordinated response, particularly at the regional level, to any disease outbreaks that could threaten the region's economic health and well-being.

In addition to infectious disease threats, APEC has shown interest in other aspects of health security. In 2009, the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) released a Strategic Framework for Food Security in APEC that was designed to achieve food security in the region. The framework recommends that APEC refocus on a comprehensive approach that tackles, in a holistic way, access to food, availability of food, supply reliability, trade liberalization, food safety, dietary health, environmental security, climate change, and sustainability. The ABAC proposal followed in 2010 at the APEC ministerial meeting in Yokohama, where an agreement was made on food security, again largely for economic reasons, to promote regional trade in food products.

The ASEAN region is also an epidemic area for HIV/AIDS. With about 3.6 million people living with AIDS, and 260,000 new

cases each year, disease transmission rates are the second highest in the world. Thus, the ASEAN region is considered highly vulnerable to HIV, with the concomitant devastating impact this major public health challenge has on productivity and economic development. ASEAN member countries have jointly negotiated with pharmaceutical companies to reduce the price of the necessary drugs and reagents used to treat persons living with AIDS. APEC could potentially serve as an effective forum for negotiating agreements on regional health challenges. An efficient model could involve negotiated assignments of responsibility for particular aspects of public health intervention such as surveillance, vaccination, information sharing, emergency preparedness, and public awareness to specific APEC economies, and the ASEAN secretariat could be tasked with improving institutional capacity of ASEAN to coordinate and manage effective implementation of the program.

Issues related to food security, such as diseases of obesity, constitute a major challenge throughout the Pacific Island nations. During April 2010, the Pacific Food Summit was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, where a framework for cooperation was negotiated. Food security is seen as a critical issue on the development agenda due to the role of economic development in shaping the social determinants of health to enable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times by all people. Food supply systems must deal with fluctuations and stress caused by markets and the environment. A key feature in this respect is building up and strengthening local capacity for food security. The emphasis on local capacity further requires respecting and valuing indigenous systems and cultures, and ensuring that traditional mechanisms and practices related to food production and consumption are respected.¹¹ In all of these considerations, the PIF should partner with APEC to shape culturally relevant health-security policies for the region.

¹¹ American Society of International Law (2010). Pacific Islands Forum, Report on International Organizations, p. 1, available online at: http://www.asil.org/rio/pacific_1010.html.

At the 2011 Pacific Island Forum meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, the forum leaders declared that noncommunicable diseases (NCD) have reached epidemic proportions in Pacific Island countries and territories, where the prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension ranks among the highest in the world.¹² The World Economic Forum ranked NCD as one of the top global threats to economic development. Within Oceania, the rapidly rising expenditure on NCD comprises well over 50 percent of the total health budget of many island nations. NCD has the potential to undermine labor supply, productivity, investment and education, four of the main factors driving the economic growth of many island countries. Healthcare costs divert funds from other priorities, such as mitigation of the effects of rising sea levels (an existential threat), education and development. Direct national and regional economic impacts are related to poor health, which reduces productivity and lowers GDP by diminishing the capacity to produce goods for export or to purchase goods from neighbors. APEC has an important opportunity to become substantively involved in addressing the NCD threat to regional economic development through the APEC Women and Economy Summit (WES), which fosters women's economic empowerment among the APEC economies. In broadening WES goals to include non-APEC economies that support a major base of global food security, a valuable lesson could be learned from the small island nation of Tonga, which is effectively mitigating the epidemic of NCD in that country through women-led, community-level educational programs on nutrition and lifestyle choices. This model could be further expanded from a regional to a global cooperation. At the forty-second PIF, Pacific Island leaders and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized the value of cooperation between the UN and the PIF and agreed to utilize the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration

¹² Coyne, T. (2000) Lifestyle Diseases in Pacific Communities, Technical Paper No. 219, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Hughes, R (Ed.) p.1, available online at: <http://www.foodsecurepacific.org/documents/Lifestyle%20Diseases%20in%20PIC.pdf>.

Framework to help identify national priorities for action in each of the Pacific Island countries. APEC should work with PIF and the UN to develop policies to manage marine food resources in the global commons, and create sustainable health-security funding strategies to improve the productivity of Pacific Island nations.

Conclusion

It is time for APEC to move beyond trade liberalization and rethink its agenda in terms of nontraditional security by addressing challenges in disaster management and health security, including related aspects of food security and climate change, all of which pose long-term, negative impacts for regional economic development. Both disaster management and health security are shared challenges that require regional strategies. APEC should work with other regional organizations like ASEAN and PIF toward building such a strategy for ensuring resilient communities and sustainable economic development for the Asia-Pacific region.