

Monthly progress update

August 2022

Leveraging ASEAN Capacities for
Emergency Response (LACER)

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LACER



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Background

“Leveraging ASEAN Capacities for Emergency Response (LACER)” is a project funded by the European Union. The overall objective is strengthened resilience in ASEAN region through improved disaster risk management. The specific objectives consists of strengthened capacity and sustainability of the AHA Centre to achieve operational excellence in disaster monitoring, preparedness and emergency response, and enhanced mechanism for ASEAN Leadership to Respond-As-One through excellence and innovation in disaster management.

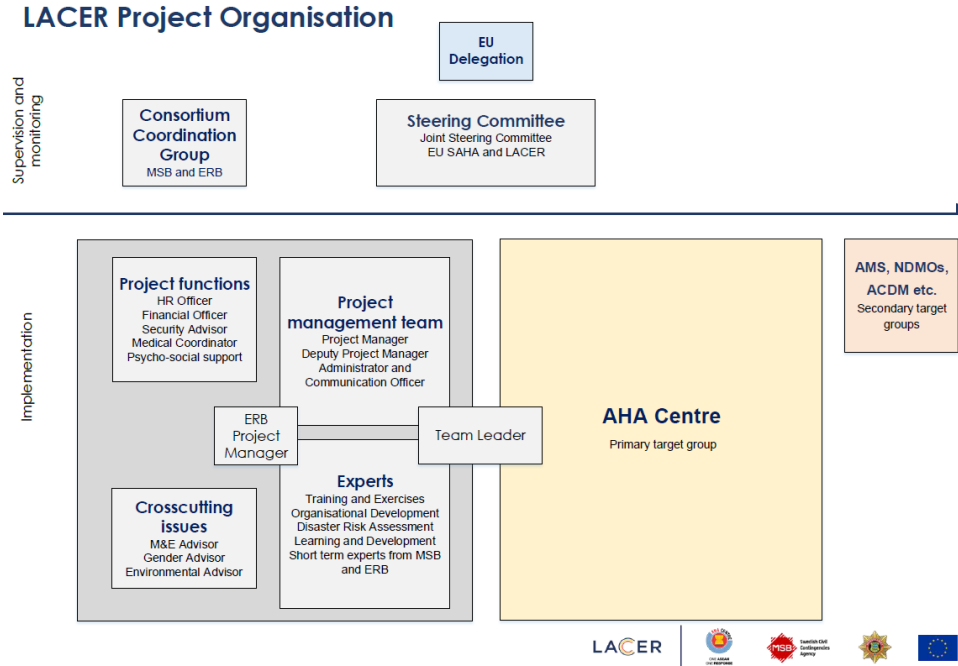
The project is implemented by a Consortium consisting of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), as lead, jointly with the Estonian Rescue Board (ERB). It is a component of the overall EU programme “Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms (EU Support to AHA Centre)”.

The project consists of the following four outcomes organised as components.

- Component 1
Strengthened institutional capacity, corporate policies and management of the AHA Centre
- Component 2
Enhanced operational capacity of the AHA Centre in monitoring, preparing and responding to disasters
- Component 3
Increased preparedness and Respond-As-One capacities of ASEAN
- Component 4
Enhanced professionalism through standards and certification

The project has a 43 month lifespan and started on March 1, 2020.

Figure 1. Illustration of the LACER project organisation structure



Project progress update for the period August 2022

Essentially, the LACER project aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of the AHA Centre to become a highly professional and trusted organisation that effectively carries out its operational mandate in facilitating and coordinating regional disaster preparedness and response, sharing European best practices and facilitating and building sustained institutional ASEAN – EU exchange. The project aims to plan for, implement and sustain organisational development using a comprehensive strategic approach. In real terms, this means that the project will not independently deliver ready products to the AHA Centre, but is committed to building sustained capacities over time.

The project is in implementation phase. Some LACER activities have not been fully implemented during the project period, which has prompted a discussion on mutual expectations and prioritisation of outputs. A no cost extension was submitted for review on 8 April 2022, which seeks to extend the project implementation period up to a total of 48 months.

New Activity: Develop a PSEAH Policy (A2.2)

In line with activity A2.2 which seeks to identify future prioritised activities in gender, AHA Centre has requested LACER support in preparing a policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH). AHA Centre, which currently only has a small section on the general topic of sexual harassment at the workplace (in its HR policy), has come to recognise that a specific PSEAH policy is essential to clarifying the expectations on staff as well as spelling out the requirements of the organisation regarding how it should prevent and respond to allegations of sexual abuse and harassment. LACER’s gender advisor is preparing an outline in the coming month, and after the approval of the policy will contribute to ensuring that the principles outlined therein are interwoven throughout the procedures and activities of AHA Centre.

Strategic and Donor Coordination (B1.3, B2.3)

During the reporting period, LACER experts shared a draft concept note with the AHA Centre senior leadership, aimed at launching a regular donor coordination meeting. Following feedback from the Executive Director, some proposed changes to the draft are currently being integrated into the text.

AHA Centre has further requested that LACER experts contribute to the development of a long term strategy/vision (5-10 years) that will look at functional and resource needs after the end of the current AADMER cycle.

Exchange of Experts (C3.2)



LACER was invited to participate in the ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (SPDDM) in Singapore 18-19 August, organised by the ASEAN Secretariat and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), with the support of SDC.



The SPDDM provides a platform to sharpen ASEAN's disaster management policies and formulate long-term strategies. The theme of this year's dialogue was "The Future of Disaster Resilience is Now: Are We Ready?" considering forward-looking ideas that can potentially enhance disaster resilience with an emphasis on the importance to act and invest now. Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs, gave introductory remarks followed by ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General, Mr Ekkaphab Phanthavong (Laos)

Day 1 comprised a demonstration of capacities at SCDF Marine Division HQ and the Civil Defence Academy. The main role of SCDF is to provide fire-fighting, rescue and emergency medical services; mitigating hazardous materials incidents, as well as to formulate, implement and enforce regulations on fire safety and civil defence shelter matters. SCDF skills were on display throughout the day, both in terms of training, exercises, and use of innovative technologies. This included demonstrations of how new technologies –such as VR, sensors which measure physical performance, and brain activity— are integrated into learning. Day 2 of the SPDDM looked at the economic effects of disasters especially the impact of climate change on human capital and the impacts of extreme weather events, which are both increasing in frequency and in their devastating effects on societies across ASEAN.



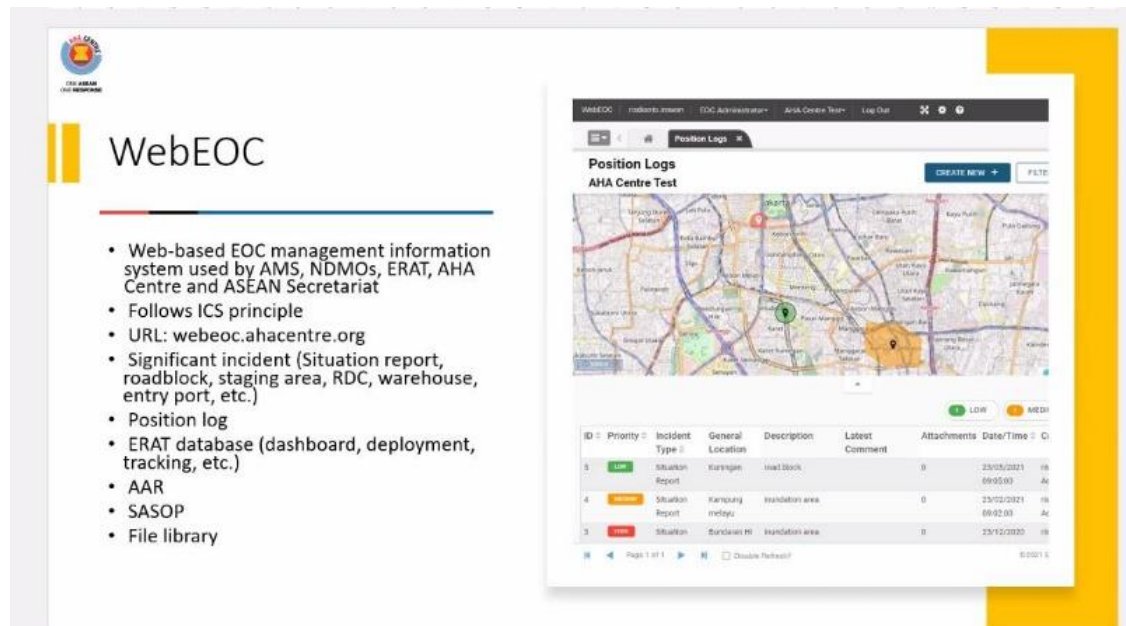
Also relative to C3.2, LACER experts plan to contribute to the upcoming ARMOR webinar, which has been postponed from September to October 11th. LACER's role is to participate in discussions and serve as peer reviewer for the paper Disaster and Pandemic: The Exacerbating Effects of COVID-19 on ASEAN's Disaster Riskscape, which examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on disaster risk and disaster management and emergency response in the ASEAN region. The full text of the publication is available at: <https://ahacentre.org/publication/armor/>

Conduct functional exercises of ERO function and evaluate (E1.1)

LACER experts were (for the first time) fully integrated into the Emergency Operations Centre Exercise whose second event was held on 3-4 August. The two-day program of EOCX 2 included a review of ERO procedures and guidelines, a Web-EOC training for all users, and a connectivity test at the end of the event.

- Day 1 targeted AHA staff, in particular new recruits who have not as yet received training in ASEAN emergency procedures and regulations. Approximately 40 participants joined from the AHA Centre (both in-person and hybrid). Executive Director Lee Yam Ming underscored the importance of restarting the preparedness exercises again after a long pause during the pandemic.

The ED further indicated the need to modernise the EOC and ERAT, making them more adapted to use of big data, artificial intelligence and new methods and means which can be shared by leading EOCs of the member states, such as that of Singapore.



- Day 2 was focused on strengthening the capacities of external, regional actors. Approximately 160 participants joined the event (130 online plus 30 in person at the AHA EOC) including from ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN ERAT members, NDMO EOC officers, and external observers such as LACER and others. In addition to the review of EROP guidelines and Web-EOC training, a significant effort was made to test ERAT connectivity, which produced solid results (98% connectivity rate reported by the ERAT team). Moreover, several new features of the Web-EOC platform were demonstrated, such as the Chat Board, which functions similarly to WhatsApp but within the Web-EOC and is linked to a particular incident.

LACER's role in the EOCX process thus far has been to observe and provide feedback and recommendations. In this sense LACER encouraged AHA Operations team to record both sessions, which allowed for a subsequent, more detailed review and analysis of content and method, allowing for more specific suggestions on improvements in future. The LACER team has been invited to facilitate and prepare scenarios for the coming EOCX 3 and 4, expected in November.

New Activity Launch: LACER Support to Development of AIM-Net (D2.5)

As reported previously AHA Centre Operations invited LACER to facilitate the relaunch of AIM-Net collaboration between AHA and ASEAN member states. AIM-Net is a regional forum and community of practice where ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) practitioners can meet to coordinate and cooperate in strengthening EOC capacities, capabilities and practices. This network has two principle tasks: to assess information management and information systems interoperability needs at the regional level, and to develop and reach consensus on information systems taxonomy, specifications, and standards. The LACER Team Leader is working closely with AHA Operations staff to co-design and facilitate a 3-day workshop set for 12-14 September in Jakarta, which will bring together representatives of the 10 member states to establish a work plan for AIM-Net.

The activity has been added to the LACER work plan as *D2.5 Support to development of AIM-Net collaboration*

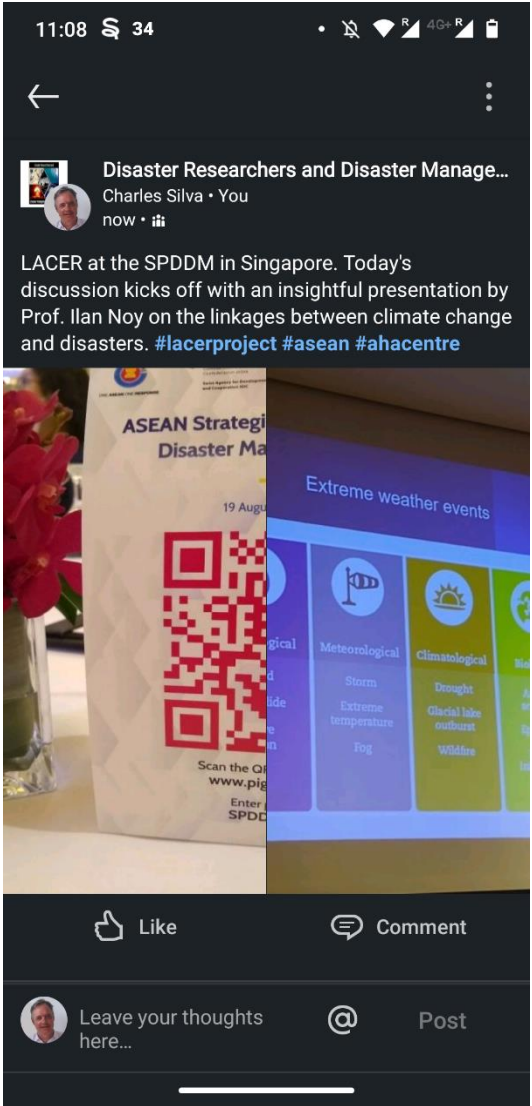
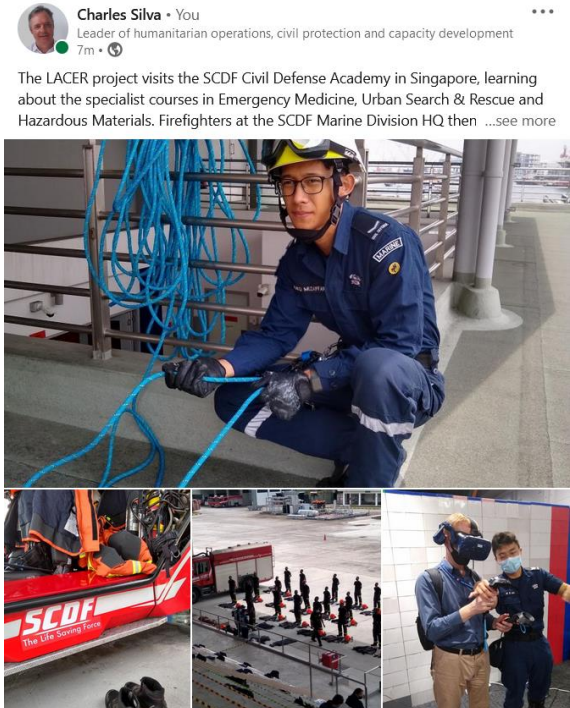
Development of ASEAN-ERAT Trainings (F3.4)

During the reporting period, the LACER Gender Advisor, Olga Bezbozhna, completed a review of the Course Curriculum for ERAT Level 1, providing feedback and recommendations on how protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) can be further integrated into the program of the ERAT course. The recommendations were shared with the ERAT team and Operations leadership.

These recommendations are in line with broader policy aims of ASEAN on PGI, including: ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Management (2021-2025), the development of a gender and protection mainstreaming strategy for the AADMER Work Programme 2021–2025, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework.

LACER Communication and visibility

LACER continues to document project activities in social media. Some examples are provided below from the recent SPDDM in Singapore:



Although not an official LACER activity, the AHA Sports Day and Social Event plays an important part in catalyzing stronger teams among the different units that participate, while also providing LACER staff with insights into team functioning within AHA Centre. Now based in Jakarta, LACER's Team Leader was happy to join the latest occasion, including badminton and other teambuilding activities, which highlighted the return to more normal routines after the long pause during the pandemic. Besides widespread staff participation in the event, it was pleasing to note the presence of AHA leadership. Images from the event were shared in social media outlets.



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