

Monthly progress update

March 2022

Leveraging ASEAN Capacities for
Emergency Response (LACER)

EuropeAid/161170/DD/ACT/Multi



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the LACER Consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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.

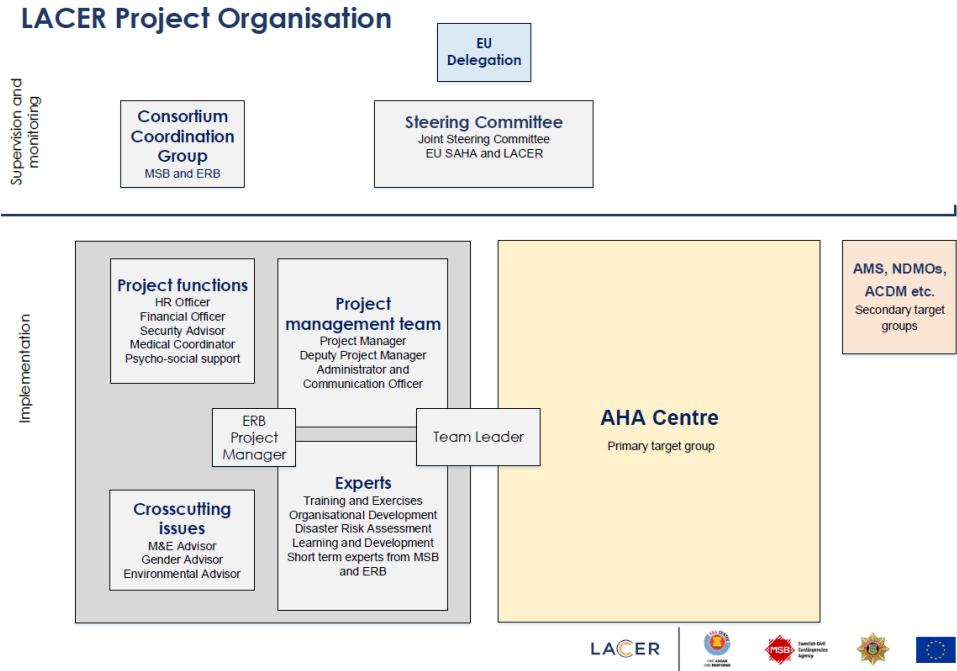
The project is implemented by a Consortium consisting of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), as lead, jointly with the Estonian Rescue Board (ERB). It is a component of the overall EU programme “Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms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

Strategic and Donor Coordination

During the reporting period, LACER leadership organised an online dialogue with OCHA ROAP (Regional Office for Asia Pacific) engaging the Bangkok-based Head of Operations, Helen Mould. The meeting laid out areas for planning and coordination, including the following topics: the current ASEAN-UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management with its focus on training and capacity building especially in Civ-Mil Coordination; OCHA's interest in developing new training opportunities in ASEAN countries as part of localisation efforts; liaising to plan the coming GPDRR; LACER's workshop on Humanitarian Principles and potential alignment with OCHA training in the ACE program; ASEAN's desire to move the UN toward more strategic training; and scenario development for the coming ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP). The LACER leadership agreed to follow up with the respective liaison officers within OCHA related to these topics and also to invite OCHA to any planned donor coordination meetings ahead.

On 23 March, LACER continued a coordination meetings with GIZ together with AHA Centre. GIZ updated on its project planning, informing that the German government has opted not to launch phase 2 of the project in 2022, but rather extend activities under phase 1 through the end of this year. There are a few activities remaining in Phase 1 with an HR and Admin focus, such as a management training for senior AHA Centre leadership from 28-30 March, establishment of a risk manual, and introduction of a digital payroll and recruitment system. Staff turnover is also underway among the GIZ Jakarta team, with Michael Weiss arriving in August as project manager, while Gordian Frey and Jörg Hager have been reassigned elsewhere and Christy Kumesan is leaving the organisation. LACER planned activities continue to be coordinated with GIZ to avoid overlap and build synergy.

Management and Leadership

During the reporting period, LACER management and leadership expert Britta Ramberg and Team Leader Charles Silva met with AHA Centre Deputy Executive Director Krishna Tanaja to provide an introductory overview to LACER as well as update on the current status of activities. In addition, Krishna agreed to collaborate closely with LACER to develop a method for capacity development of AHA Centre's middle management. Krishna shared his vision of leadership and management in the organisation for the coming five years with a focus on middle management developing skills needed to become senior management and assume leadership of the body moving forward.

The LACER team will develop a concept note for the middle management activity based on assessing the current capacity of approx. 10 middle managers, developing targets, and establishing a mentoring activity to move the middle managers toward the set targets. Overall this activity will be set up in line with the desire to create a horizon for employment in the long term and overcome some of the short term barriers to staff retention. In this respect it is also relevant to build on the experiences from the GIZ training in leadership slated for 28-30 March.

Cross-Cutting Gender Equality and Environment Perspectives

During the reporting period, LACER gender expert Olga Bezbozhna Leobrandt completed the review of the AHA Centre Financial Rules and Regulations (ACFRR) from a gender perspective. The findings of the review suggest that there is a further need to emphasize gender equality and diversity in the steering documents and policies of the AHA Centre. Similar to AHA Centre's Staff Rules and Regulations, the ACFRR rarely (almost never) makes specific reference to promotion of gender equality and human rights, which is an aspect that can (and should) be developed in future. Additionally, it is recommended to look into development of a self-standing internal policy document, outlining the AHA Centre approach to promotion of gender equality internally, externally and in operational terms. Also, there is a need to further revise the Code of Conduct to strengthen commitment to gender equality and human rights perspectives.

The ACFRR is now under review from the perspective of environmental sustainability.

Mutual Exchange and Learning between EU and AHA Centre

The LACER Team Leader Charles Silva conducted a visit to Brussels 20-23 March for the twofold purpose of planning and coordination activities with counterparts in the ERCC and participation in the European Humanitarian Forum, co-organised by the European Commission and the French Presidency. Participation by the LACER Program Manager was cancelled due to sudden illness.

A central purpose of the visit to ERCC was to discuss and plan for the upcoming Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in May 2022 in Bali, Indonesia. LACER and ERCC experts will participate in a side event scheduled for 25 May 2022, together with several regional DRM bodies such as the AHA Centre, facilitated by UN OCHA, on the topic of *Standby Arrangements in Regional Context*. This offered an occasion to review practicalities for ERCC participation and challenges in light of the currently stretched resources due to the Ukraine response. Charles met with ERCC Team Leader Ionut Homeag (A1) to consider the modalities for sending experts to the GPDRR and an accompanying LACER activity to be held at the AHA Centre in Jakarta in conjunction with the visit to the GPDRR. ERCC is considering suitable candidates and has expressed interest in participating along the lines of the formal request, pending availability.

The visit also included a meeting with Christer Brown, ERCC expert on strategic anticipation and the development of ERCC 2.0 (A2), who provided a briefing on recent UCPM activations, development of new ERCC information products stemming from the Ukraine crisis, deployment of rescEU assets globally, developments in ERCC 2.0, and the new regulation amending the UCPM legislation of 2013 to overcome limitations experienced within the mechanism during Covid-19 pandemic. Christer, who also informed LACER of potential support from ECHO A3 and B3, remains a vital contact for the LACER project within the ERCC, facilitating contacts with key experts across multiple project areas and sharing highlights of new developments within the organisation.

Additionally, the LACER Team Leader met Simon Stermann, DG ECHO (B1) expert on host nation support and civil protection horizontal issues. LACER updated Simon on the next steps regarding collaboration with AHA Centre around HNS (the subject of a recent webinar), while Simon shared insights on his team's work with scenario building, which may prove relevant to coming LACER engagement on the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP).

While in Brussels the LACER Team Leader also participated in the three day European Humanitarian Forum. The event included a number of panels related to LACER's activities, including:

- Humanitarian civil military coordination: an enabler of humanitarian action (March 21) – highlighted current coordination gaps in civ-mil coordination, such as the lack of monitoring and compliance following training, CMCoord officers not being heard in field context, and a strong need to get stakeholders in humanitarian response to grasp one another's mandates.
- Changing the way we manage disasters: linking anticipatory action and social protection to protect agricultural livelihoods from shocks in Asia (March 23) – moderated by Davide Zappa of DG ECHO, the event included a presentation by Dr. Riyanti Djalante, Assistant Director, Head of Division-Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, ASEAN Secretariat, who highlighted the importance of synchronising new initiatives with AADMER.
- Flexible localised emergency response: learning to walk the talk on localisation and inclusive humanitarian action during COVID and in post-coup Myanmar (March 23) – a number of Myanmar based local NGOs presented on humanitarian response from their own perspective. LACER plans to share
- Strengthening the Coordination of the European Response to the Ukraine Crisis (March 22) This discussion, moderated by Hans Das, Director of DG ECHO (A), looked at some of the current challenges of IHL, access, logistics, delivery and coordination of aid, and transfer of funds that must be overcome in order for the European response to reach effectively the affected populations with urgent needs. The briefing also noted some successes of the "Team Europe" approach adopted by the Commission and the Member States in addressing these challenges. These insights will prove valuable for an upcoming brown bag webinar being planned by LACER. Against the backdrop of launching humanitarian operations in Myanmar scheduled for March, AHA Centre has requested LACER to arrange a briefing on UCPM activation in response to the crisis in Ukraine. AHA Centre has moreover suggested that ASEAN member states be invited to participate in the webinar, along with the ERCC. Scheduling will depend on availability of experts given current requirements.

During the reporting period, the LACER team has not yet received confirmation from the Organisation Team in DG ECHO on the workshop "Sharing experiences and follow up from the response to the Central Sulawesi disaster in Indonesia 2018" which was proposed by MSB as an official event of the 7th European Union Civil Protection Forum, 28 – 29 June 2022, in Brussels.

Launch of Component 3 Activities targeting Operational Capacity

During the reporting period, LACER experts continued to collaborate with the AHA Centre Project Management Team supporting development of the ASEAN-ERAT function. LACER is engaging in review and development of the in-person Induction Training planned for June 2022 in Thailand, under the leadership of former Deputy ED Arnel Capili., along with the ACE program. With the support of Arnel, LACER has suggested that its experts observe the course live, pending AHA Centre approval. The event will be organised at the Thai Disaster Prevention and Mitigation facility in Hua Hin.

Regarding the overall evaluation of ERAT including review of the roster, the LACER team was informed by Director of Operations Dr. Sithu that the overall evaluation of ERAT has been put on hold until the completion of the current training program next year. This is based on decisions taken by the Advisory Group for ASEAN-ERAT, the PSC, and the PRR Working Group which met recently to consider the issue. At these instances, the ASEAN Secretariat expressed an interest to prioritize the agreement with the Japanese donor on completion of the ERAT training over conducting an evaluation. The current training program includes a requirement for two induction trainings, four level-2 courses and several level-3 trainings in the two-year period. In light of this LACER will now consider whether its related activities can be completed during the time frame of the project (and potential no-cost extension).

Component 4 Activities targeting Standards and Certification

On 25 March, the AHA ASCEND team briefed LACER leadership on the status of their project activities related to developing a regionally recognized competence profile and certification system for DRM professionals. The project has entered into a critical phase now, with a pilot assessment tool slated for trial simulation in 2022, followed by an anticipated decision by ASEAN on which type of mutual recognition standard to adopt and with which modalities for roll out. In light of these developments, and at the request of ASCEND’s Coordinator, the LACER team agreed to collaborate with ASCEND on developing means for sharing learning into EU’s regional certification and recognition process, as well as any relevant EU experience with trial simulation. Activities looking forward may include an online introduction as well as an in-person technical exchange with experts.

Communication and visibility

LACER organisational development expert Peter Månsson prepared an article for publication in AHA Centre’s online magazine *The Column*. The article describes the creation of a DRM tool for use within ASEAN region. Aside from assessing the disaster management capacities of the AHA Centre, the tool can support the mapping of external support and the existing institutional framework.

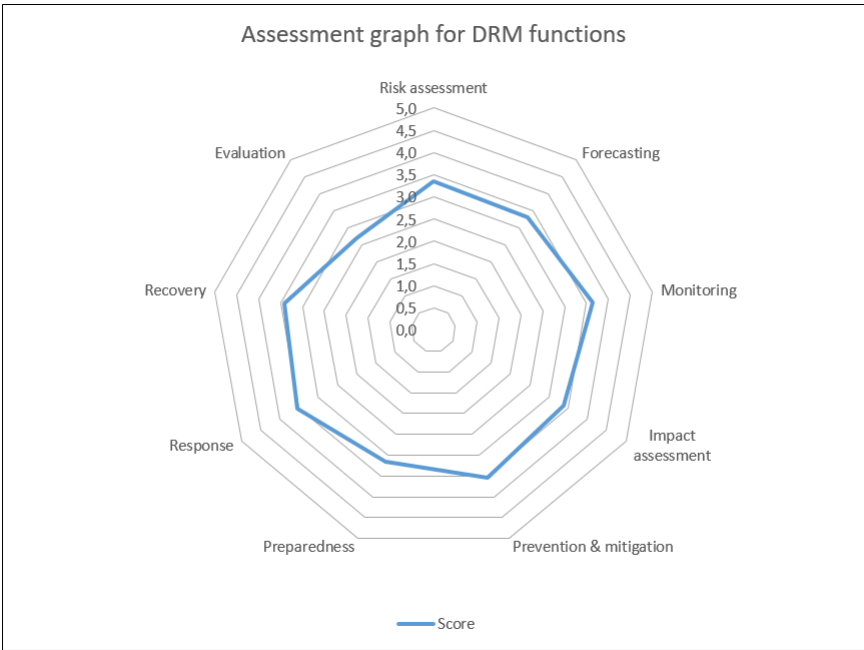


Fig. 2. Spider chart illustrating an organization’s prerequisites for performing different DRM functions

Moreover, it may be used for assessing and comparing disaster management capabilities of ASEAN Member States. Such an overview would enable the AHA Centre to guide the Member States toward developing specific disaster management abilities. This would not only benefit members but allow the AHA Centre to play a pivotal role as a mediator of cross-border collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, while strengthening disaster management capabilities across the region. Publication is expected shortly.



Figure 2. Deputy Executive Director interviewed by LACER

During the reporting period, LACER expert Johanna Rixer conducted an interview with AHA Centre Deputy Executive Director Krishna Tanaja, which will be published as a feature article on the LACER website. Krishna describes his vision for the organisation as well as his plan to improve staff retention. His suggestion is to create a career path within the organisation.

This would decrease the gap between the middle management and the top management and also make the AHA Centre a more attractive employer, as well as retaining staff over time. This is something that Krishna believes would have a strong value to the organisation, to be able to recruit within AHA Centre rather than externally.

On 29 March, the LACER Communications Expert and Team Leader joined the Initial Briefing for the EU-ASEAN Cooperation Expo 2022, under the auspices of Landell-Mills. LACER is planning to contribute to the Expo as an exhibitor, introducing humanitarian and capacity development experts, sharing information on project activities and events, and reaching a wider audience with video material on EU support to disaster management capacity in ASEAN.

At the request of EU Communications Team Leader Dian Saputra, LACER participated in a mentoring session with three staff from the EU-ASEAN competition shortlisted candidate, Trauma Tropisme,



Fig. 3. LACER Team Leader mentoring local NGO Trauma Tropisme

whose project *Take Care of Our Memory* enables children to tell stories of the Sulawesi disaster through poetry. While not strictly related to LACER outputs, the opportunity to mentor an Indonesian youth NGO enabled LACER to contribute positively to broader EU-ASEAN

relations, develop community resilience toward disasters, and further to spread awareness about LACER cooperation among the general public. The LACER Team Leader has agreed to make himself available for follow-up mentoring role in this context.