

# Monthly progress update

October 2021

Leveraging ASEAN Capacities for  
Emergency Response (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.

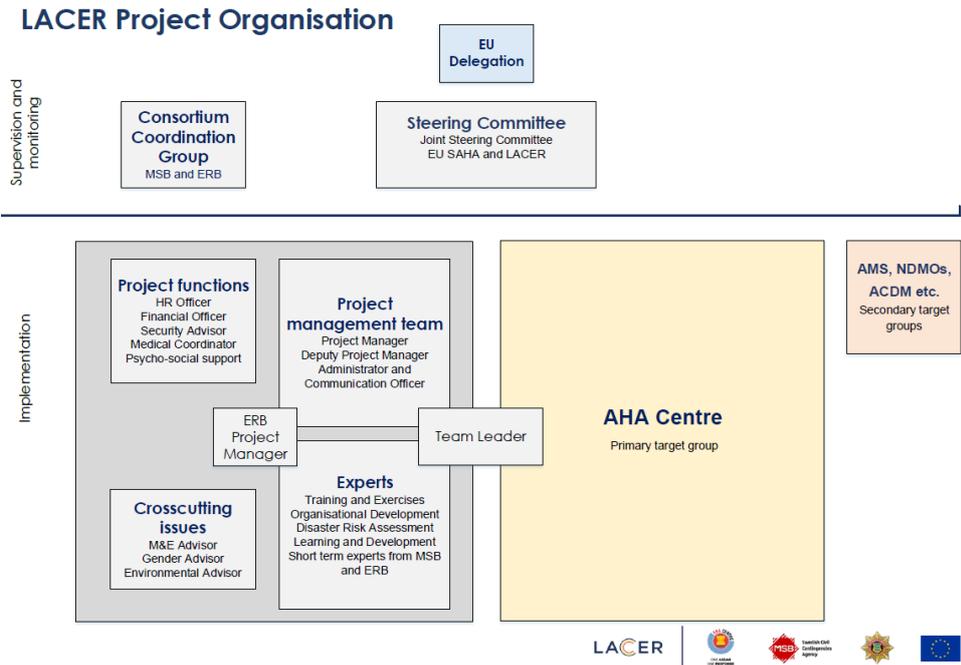
The project is implemented by a Consortium consisting of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agencies (MSB), as lead, jointly with the Estonian Rescue Board (ERB). It is a component of the overall EU programme “Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms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

Fig 1. Illustration of the LACER project organisation structure



## **Project progress update for the period October 2021**

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.

### **Deployment of Team Leader**

The process of obtaining a visa for Team Leader Charles Silva is currently in the hands of the Swedish Foreign Office / Swedish Embassy in Indonesia. The LACER team will share any updates on the situation as information becomes available.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

On 28-29 September, the LACER leadership organised a workshop to develop progress markers for the project, facilitated by M&E Advisor Carina Brandow, joined by Organisational Development Expert Peter Månsson, Project Leader Carl-Johan Breitholtz and Team Leader Charles Silva.

The purpose of the workshop was to develop a set of progress markers which acts as a complement to the logframe reporting on indicators. The progress markers will be used principally as an internal tool to understand and react to the change process in which the AHA Centre is engaged, tracing what has been accomplished, while being reminded of what still needs to be achieved. Moving beyond the indicator type question of what has changed, progress markers focus on how and why change occurs.

### **Strategic planning and donor coordination**

During the reporting period, LACER Team Leader held an online discussion with partners of AHA Centre including the FCDO, as represented by Senior Humanitarian Advisor Laina Henderson, who was previously embedded with the AHA Centre but now supports its operations remotely. Laina expressed interest in future FCDO engagement on donor coordination of AHA Centre partners.

The LACER Team Leader also met with Oliver Lacey-Hall, former OCHA representative in Southeast Asia who now heads up DFAT support to Indonesia's national disaster risk management capacity (the SIAP SIAGA programme). Oliver also shared his desire to coordinate with the AHA Centre/LACER on any regional initiatives emerging from his programme.

### **Regional risks and emergency centre evaluation**

At the urging of LACER, particularly during the Strategic Workshops of summer 2021 and the Risk Assessment Workshop with JRC and DG ECHO in September, the AHA Centre has reinstated its duty officer function and rolled out a new procedure for training and follow up to ensure effective implementation. The duty office is henceforth scheduled according to a weekly rotation of 9 staff from the Operation Department, on a mandatory basis. The duty officer is tasked with 24/7 monitoring of imminent disasters, as well as alerting the DMA unit (Disaster Monitoring and Analysis) and ERAT teams, which can initiate preparation for a response. All duty officers receive training by the DMA Officer on the tasks expected of them while carrying out their functions.

The LACER team assesses these developments as highly beneficial and reflective of system change. Importantly, the reinstatement of the duty officer function has occurred in parallel with the launch of a new procedure to ensure sustainability, include revised guidelines for operational procedures (Duty Officer Guidelines v2021 AHA Centre Duty Officer System). Moreover, the LACER project is cited in the new Guidelines as the framework for the duty officer function. LACER thus considers the function as more sustainable, particularly as it has been instituted in a thoughtful and carefully planned manner. The development is thus fully in line with LACER objectives to strengthen the operational capacity of the AHA Centre in monitoring, preparing and responding to disasters as well as enhancing its role as the main regional coordination agency.

LACER will continue to work with AHA Centre staff to develop this capacity further. In this vein, there is an opportunity to make a LACER contribution to regional disaster risk planning as part of an upcoming review of the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan



## **Duty Officer Guidelines v2021**

AHA Centre Duty Officer System  
Operations Division

(AJDRP), as suggested by colleagues in AHA-C. A second opportunity to build on this capacity has come as a result of the September workshop involving the JRC, which has subsequently invited AHA Centre and LACER to participate and engage in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual DRMKC (Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre) Seminar, followed by a discussion between key JRC staff and AHA Centre counterparts on the ASEAN vision for a regional knowledge hub and how this could interface with the European knowledge network moving forward. For further information, please also see: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/Partnership/Annual-Seminar/5th-DRMKC-annual-Seminar>

### **Induction training**

The AHA Centre has recruited a new Admin and HR Officer, Maria Puspitawati (Jenny) who is a key interface on a number of LACER activities. With an eye toward developing Jenny into a change leader within the Centre, the LACER team has arranged to brief her on the aims of the project and encourage her to play a key role in achieving our desired outcomes. Already now, Jenny is coordinating with LACER expert Olivia Setkic in launching the Induction Training at the earliest.

### **Cross-Cutting Gender Equality and Environment Perspectives**

In the past week, the Corporate Affairs Division (CAD) of the AHA Centre shared the revised Procurement Guidelines for review by LACER experts in gender equality and environment. The LACER team further anticipates that the AHA Financial Regulations will be shortly conveyed for similar review.

The LACER leadership is also in discussions with the AHA Centre on how to accelerate gender and inclusive DRM, following the launch of the ASEAN Regional Framework on PGI in Disaster Management 2021-2025, an initiative co-sponsored by UN Women and DG ECHO, which articulates a shared vision in promoting gender equality and social inclusion in disaster management across the region. The AHA Centre has indicated that it plans to partner with Canadian Government on this effort and has expressed interest in a LACER contribution, as the plan is developed.

## Exchange of experiences between EU and AHA Centre

LACER conducted its second brown bag webinar for a total of 25 participants on 22 October, led by Peter Månsson who presented on his engagement in the recent EUCPT deployment to Haiti. Peter was on the ground managing a number of functions for the EUCPT embedded within UNDAC OSOCC in Les Cayes. Besides describing the massive challenges in security and logistics for the mission, the presentation provided a detailed view of the damages on the ground and heavy needs among the affected population. The ensuing questions and dialogue with the AHA team brought to light many salient points about disaster preparedness and response.

As with the recent workshops, this brown bag saw broad participation from AHA Centre staff, with representation from all units particularly Operations. Moreover, the quality of engagement was high, as questions and dialogue reflected concerns that AHA teams have faced during their own responses, such as overall leadership and coordination issues, the importance of Host Nation Support and pre-deployment arrangements between governments, the added value of out-of-area operations, Covid risks during implementation deployment, multi-hazard planning and scenarios, and the timeliness of information dissemination.

The next brown bag webinar is tentatively planned for November, looking to exchange experiences on the Disaster Risk Monitoring System set up by the Pacific Disaster Center for use by AHA Centre.

## Communication and visibility

Volume 76 of the AHA Centre publication *The Column* featured an introduction of LACER Team Leader Charles Silva, based on a text drafted by LACER expert Johanna Rixer. A cut out of the article is attached below (source: <https://thecolumn.ahacentre.org/the-column-vol-76/>)



**INTRODUCING**  
**CHARLES SILVA**  
**LACER PROJECT TEAM LEADER**

**The AHA Center welcomed in August a new team leader for the LACER project, Mr Charles Silva of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).**

He has previously implemented capacity-building projects in Southeast Asia, a region that he "respects and holds dear", but the LACER project offers a big leap in scope given the significant number of people served by the project and its partner institution the AHA Centre. The ASEAN countries have a combined population of over 650 million people and collectively face growing risks from natural disasters and their increasing impact. Recurring earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, flooding and pandemics take a big toll on the region. For this reason, Charles sought the LACER role as he sees himself solidly contributing to addressing this widening humanitarian challenge and the urgent need to reduce the scale of damage, injury and economic loss caused by disasters.

Charles is well used to working in different countries and cultures, a capability which will prove very useful in the ASEAN region, which encompasses many different ethnicities, languages, cultures and histories. His background combines more than 15 years of experience leading initiatives in humanitarian response and capacity strengthening in disaster risk reduction and management (DRR/DRM) and this should greatly assist him in making the LACER project a success.

What attracted Charles to the AHA Centre was its dedicated team of qualified staff who currently deliver services across a number of key functions of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. He is looking forward to building on this and helping the AHA Centre team to achieve improved capacity in these areas and indeed over the broader range of project areas made accessible by LACER, while in parallel using the links created by the project to strengthen institutional ties between ASEAN bodies and their counterparts in the EU. Charles is convinced that this cooperation will provide a big boost to the overall capacity of ASEAN's DRR/DRM strategies.

Like the MSB, each national disaster management organisation across the ASEAN region has a unique way of working and a national context in which it operates. According to Charles, this makes cooperation very complex but at the same time rewarding because each agency can contribute something special and important to the regional effort. "I am really eager and interested to expand my learning of how these national agencies undertake key functions such as preparedness and mitigation to understand their potential contribution to the regional capacity," Charles said.

When asked what he most looks forward to in the coming weeks, he replied that he had a very hands-on approach to his work, so that above all, he was looking forward to quickly deploying to Jakarta and meeting his counterparts in the AHA Centre in person. He also wants to become more familiar with the team here and ongoing activities, as well as launching new activities under the project.

**"We have a lot of exciting initiatives coming up and I am eager to roll these out together with our highly capable partners across the ASEAN region!"**

The father of two children, Olivier, 8, and Leah, who is still a toddler, Charles and his wife Gitu have their home base in Stockholm, but have been on the road for many years, working in humanitarian contexts such as Myanmar and Iraq. The family spent several years in Nepal, where both parents engaged in rebuilding infrastructure damaged by the devastating earthquakes of 2015. They live an active lifestyle and enjoy skiing, sailing and hiking together.

**LACER** |  |  | 

During the reporting period, the AHA Centre has also requested LACER support on a number of media-related tasks. These include first providing feedback on a draft concept note for an AHA Centre Virtual Book to commemorate the 10th anniversary. This publication aims to feature the stories of AHA Centre personnel who have been with the organisation for longer periods so as to comment on the journey of the organisation. In addition, it aims to collate lessons learned from the change process in the past decade, looking at similarities and differences in what different individual staff have valued. AHA Centre estimates the virtual book will be finalised in December 2021.

In addition, the LACER Team Leader has been requested to serve as expert in supporting AHA Centre on improving their media monitoring capacity. Charles is thus providing inputs on a weekly basis for a media monitoring and agenda setting tool that AHA Centre is refining to track media reporting (online, print, social media etc.) on its activities.

During the reporting period the following communication and visibility activities have been conducted.

Date	Target Group	Activity
13 Oct	LACER stakeholders and partners	Website LACER: International DRR day: Interview with LA Dimallig, The AHA Centre: <a href="http://lacerproject.eu">Lacer (lacerproject.eu)</a>
13 Oct	MSB international stakeholders	Website MSB.se/en: Article on International DRR Day, LACER is included as one of the programme's of the Resilience Building section: <a href="http://msb.se">Building resilience to strengthen disaster risk reduction (msb.se)</a>
13 Oct	MSB stakeholders	LinkedIn: Post with link to the above mentioned article
13 Oct	MSB Swedish stakeholders	MSB Social media; Facebook and Twitter: Acknowledging the DRR day with link to the Resilience Building sections work (including LACER)
27 Oct	LACER stakeholders and partners	Website LACER: Article on brown bag discussions on Haiti EUCPT response: <a href="http://lacerproject.eu">Lacer (lacerproject.eu)</a>