

Monthly progress update

September 2021

Leveraging ASEAN Capacities for
Emergency Response (LACER)

EuropeAid/161170/DD/ACT/Multi

LACER



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.

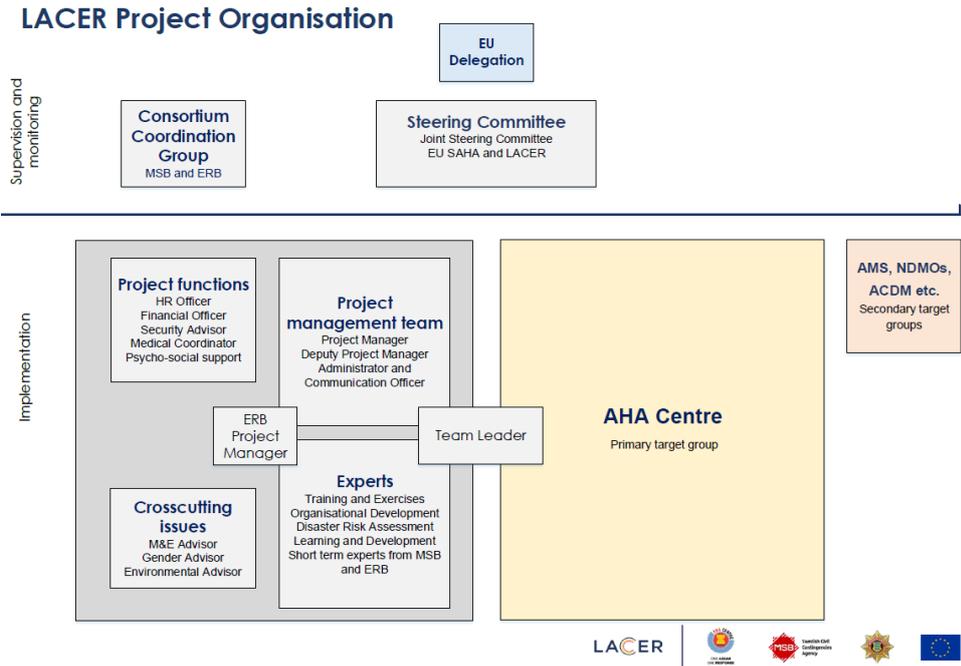
The project is implemented by a Consortium consisting of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agencies (MSB), as lead, jointly with the Estonian Rescue Board (ERB). It is a component of the overall EU programme “Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms (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 months lifespan and started on March 1, 2020.

Fig 1. Illustration of the LACER project organisation structure



Project progress update for the period September 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.

Strategic planning and donor coordination

On 15 September, the LACER project leadership participated in the Project Steering Committee meeting of the parallel EU SAHA project, which has multiple points of synchronisation with LACER activities and outcomes. This occasion further served as a first glimpse of Mr. Lee Yam Ming, newly appointed Executive Director of the AHA Centre. Mr. Yam Ming highlighted several priorities of the AHA Centre moving forward, including a review of the EOC function, which are also of central interest to LACER programming. The LACER project leadership has followed up with a request to meet the new ED at the earliest possible, with the intention of both briefing him on the status of activities and engaging him fully in the achievement of LACER objectives. In addition, the LACER team will also undertake follow up contacts with other central actors of the PSC, such as Dr. Riyanti Djalante, Assistant Director and Head of Division for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance at the ASEAN Secretariat, with an eye toward engaging them and securing their support for LACER project implementation in AHA Centre and other fora.

That same week, the LACER Reference Group held its quarterly meeting, bringing together disaster risk management, capacity building and project management experts from Swedish academic and governmental institutions. Beginning with a review of the ongoing leadership change in the AHA Centre and the Covid response in Myanmar, the discussion then focussed on strategic concerns such as how to better engage NDMOs in LACER programming and efforts to reduce high turnover in the AHA Centre.

During the reporting period, the LACER team held two coordination meetings with AHA Centre partner, GIZ, during which the latter briefed on activities planned during the second phase of their development cooperation with AHA-C as well as considering where synergies could be maximised with ongoing and future LACER programming in the area of human resources. GIZ has expressed interest in LACER leading a donor coordination exercise in the coming months. In that respect the LACER team also plans in the coming month to reach out to other ASEAN partners such as OCHA, DFAT and FCDO.

Regional risks and emergency centre evaluation

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 has implemented, in close cooperation with the OPS division of AHA Centre and EU Joint Research Centre (JRC), two activities in September.

The first activity on 8 September commenced with a discussion of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) risk assessment guidelines, with presentations from both DG ECHO

and JRC, followed by presentations on the respective Swedish and Estonian national processes for risk assessment (led by ERB and MSB experts from these processes), looking then at how these feed into the regional planning perspective.

The second activity was built around a study visit at JRC itself on 9 September, in which the JRC Disaster Risk Management unit shared insights on the development of the Global Disaster Alerts and Coordination System (GDACS), the Global Flood Information System, and its role in supporting DG ECHO. Thereafter, the AHA Centre presented on its own risk assessment process, while JRC gave a demo on practical application of the GDACS tool, using the example of two major incidents (an earthquake and tropical cyclone).

The two-day event achieved all of its formal objectives, including:

- To understand how the UCPM risk assessment guidelines were developed as processes
- To gain knowledge of how risk assessment plans are translated to response plans
- To generate a discussion on the AHA centre's processes on conceptualisation of implementing risk assessment activities in the AADMER Work Programme and the AHA Centre Work Plan
- To provide an understanding of how the JRC conducts its work with regards to risk assessments and monitoring.

Besides the substantial participation observed during the two-day event, with a total of more than 20 experts joining the dialogue, there was a very active discussion among the various participants both at an operational and technical level. Particularly on the Operations side of the AHA Centre was seen a palpable interest to learn more about the JRC and its workings, as reflected in dozens of queries raised during and after the presentations. AHA Centre also expressed a tentative vision for a regional level reporting on risk assessment.

A key reflection is the importance of connecting disaster management practitioners and policy makers with scientists and researchers, building on the collective knowledge of DRM expertise worldwide and aligning the joint capacity of relevant disaster information systems that can mutually benefit one another and their users. The two-day activity clearly demonstrated the significance of bringing together technical experts from the EU and ASEAN, with a focus on mutual exchange of experiences, tools and methods.

Secondly, the two-day event demonstrated the great importance of the European Commission's science and knowledge service in providing independent evidence to the process of decision making and as a means to influence EU policies. This future capacity is highly relevant in the ASEAN context where a concerted investment in shared science and knowledge services has not yet been witnessed, except in a few narrow technical areas like meteorology.

Another recurring reflection during the event is the realisation that ASEAN and the EU share many common challenges in disaster risk management, not least the growing number and intensity of natural hazards in both regions. In their respective endeavours to prepare for and manage recurring crises, both ASEAN and the EU have strived to maximise the use of innovative technical approaches – flash updates and other information products, flood awareness systems, regional incident databases, satellite imagery in real time – with the intention to improve monitoring and assessment, facilitate information exchange among all actors, and support decision-making and coordination.

Finally, colleagues from the AHA Centre have expressed interested in further technical exchanges with their counterparts in the ERCC and DG ECHO, particularly regarding the following areas:

- to understand the working of the GDACS and its operational use by AHA Centre
- to improve knowledge of how the JRC produces scientific reports at the regional level

- to plan for adaptation of AHA Centre’s ADINet to increase its relevance and global reach
- Presentation of AHA Centre’s vision of a regional knowledge management hub to European counterparts
- Potential EU/LACER contribution to upcoming regional disaster risk planning as part of review of AJDRP

Induction training

With multiple purposes in mind, the Induction Training facilitated by LACER and AHA Centre personnel is seen as a very important change process. After several months of planning the induction package will soon be ready for roll out and the LACER team has received word that this is expected to happen in late October. A new HR Officer has been recruited and is due to start work on 1 October, which will possibly allow enough preparation time to launch the activity as planned. Head of CAD, Somsanith Ninthavong, has moreover shared some details of the contents of the training; while LACER team awaits further information on the other parts of the training.

Establishment of a “LACER Core Team” within the AHA Centre

To ease the implementation of activities and processes within LACER it was decided in July to set up a LACER Core Team within the AHA Centre, comprising the OPS Director, CAD Director, Deputy Executive Director, Resource and Mobilisation Manager, and a Change and Knowledge Officer. The Core Team was expected to be present thereafter at all bi-weekly meetings as well as responsible for follow up on LACER related implementation within AHA-C. However, due to staff changes in AHA-C leadership, combined with the workload arising from the Myanmar response, it has not been possible thus far to assemble the Core Team as planned. LACER project leadership continues to emphasize the importance of Core Team participation as per the agreed commitment.

Handover of Team Leader Function for LACER

Kajsa Sjösvärd completed her service as Team Leader and successfully transferred the tasks and functions of Team Leader to Charles Silva on 10 September, following an extensive handover period. The LACER team expressed its gratitude to Kajsa for her dedication, positive spirit and steadfast efforts to advance the project objectives over the past year.

Communication and visibility

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

Date	Target Group	Activity
24 Sept	LACER partners and stakeholders; the Column target audience	A “Meet the Experts” interview conducted with Lawrence Dimailig, Assistant Director, Disaster Monitoring & Analysis, AHA Centre. To be published on the website first week of Oct. The AHA Centre has expressed interest in publishing it in their channels. Tbd.
16 Sept	LACER partners and stakeholders	Website news article on Workshop on risk analysis and assessment, 8-9 September, with AHA Centre, JRC and DG ECHO
10 Sept	LACER partners and stakeholders	Website news article on new Team Leader and contact information updated.

10 Sept	LACER partners and stakeholders	Website news article introducing new Team Leader with an interview. The AHA Centre will publish it in the upcoming publication of The Column.
9 Sept	LinkedIn	A positive post on LinkedIn on the risk analysis and assessment workshop from a member of the AHA Centre.