



Workshop Report

A three-intensive day workshop on the development of cross- border contingency plans was successfully organized in two National Societies of Laos and Thailand. The workshop was among many attempts from both National Societies to ensure timely and effective responses to humanitarian needs of affected people.

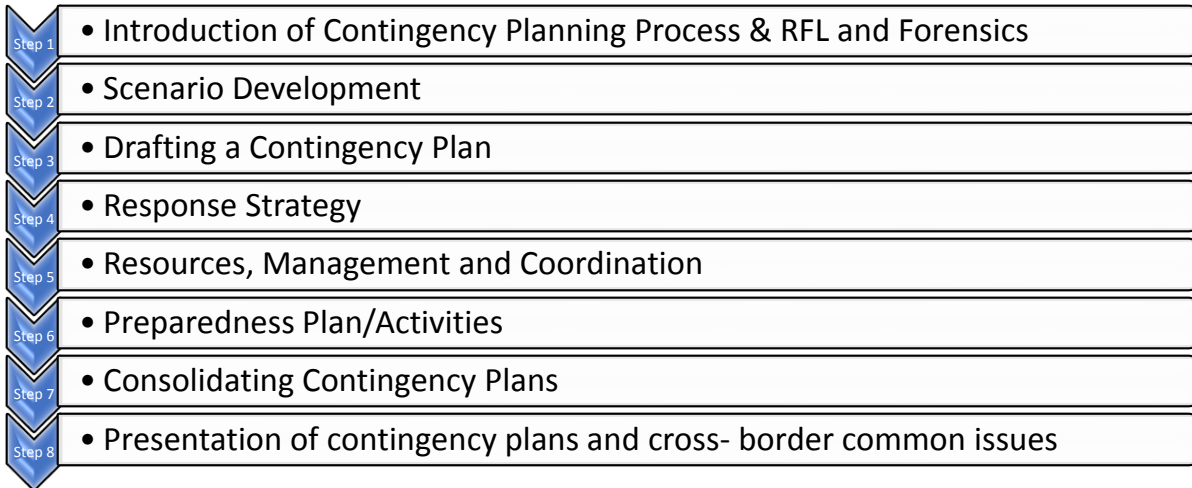


Contingency planning aims to prepare National Societies at various levels to respond well to an emergency and its potential humanitarian impact. Developing a contingency plan involves making decisions in advance about the management of human and financial resources, coordination and communications procedures, and being aware of a range of technical and logistical responses. Such planning is a management tool, involving all sectors, which can help ensure timely and effective provision of humanitarian aid to those most in need when a disaster occurs. Time spent in contingency planning equals time saved when a disaster occurs. Effective contingency planning should lead to timely and effective disaster-relief operations.

The workshop focused on addressing these key steps in the Figure 1 below:



Lao- Thailand Cross- Border Contingency Planning



The workshop attended by 96 participants from 21 provinces (provincial Red Cross chapters, Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Department of Health) along the Mekong River of Laos and Thailand. As a result, three contingency plans were developed focusing on the most common hazard of the both sides is flood which triggers secondary threats on food and nutrition, shelter and NFIs, Health and Care, WASH and logistics.

The workshop was facilitated by experienced staff from Lao RC, Thai RC, ICRC and IFRC CCST.

The broader objective of the workshop was to capacitate national society staff in contingency planning while more specifically, the workshop's objectives and outputs are:

- Enhance understanding of external risks pertinent to both countries (mapping of external environment with a special focus on hazards, risks, challenges and vulnerabilities of the most vulnerable groups of population, including migrants;
- Develop scenarios for joint response, especially related to environmental hazards around the Mekong River for possible cross- border movements;
- To prepare a comprehensive response plan that will take into consideration identified external risks as well as response capacities of the border branches;
- Further, the process is expected to foster in-country and cross-border cooperation between National Societies and the respective government agencies (NDMO, border authorities etc.).

It is anticipated that all the participants to be able to describe the contingency plan, specifying its importance and the contingency planning process. The outcomes of the workshop were draft contingency plans for the selected provinces from the both sides. The workshop was designed to be very practical where participants put their hands on developing contingency plans through step by step process as refer to Figure 1 above.

Three scenarios were developed by participants based on existing information collected before and during the workshop and their assumptions as well.



Three scenarios as below:

The agreed flood scenario for the Contingency Planning is the residual effects of Tropical Storm 'A' bringing heavy rainfall to the northern and northeastern provinces of Thailand and northern provinces in Lao PDR, causing the Mekong River to over flow and triggering flash floods (UNOCHA, 2016). The occurrences is around mid-May, heavy rain has been affecting several northern LMB provinces over the past weeks causing severe floods with a total estimated 8,000 household families affected in Lao provinces (Bokeo, Xayabury, Vientiane Mun.) and over 10,000 household families affected in Thai provinces (Chiang Rai, Loei, Uttaradit, Nan, Phayao, and Pitsanulok), mostly Chiang Rai with reported deaths. But as this is a medium to large scale emergency, over 100,000 people would be affected for both countries.

The agreed flood scenario for the Contingency Planning is the prolonged flooding from heavy rainfall, causing overflow of rivers in the central provinces of Laos (Vientiane Capital, Borkhamxay, Khammoune) and the northeastern provinces in Thailand (NongKhai, Beungkarn, Nakhon Phatum) with the estimated caseload (people in need of humanitarian assistance) for a medium to large scale emergency is 100,000 people affected in the two countries. The flooding was the result of localized severe rainfall associated with the tropical storm "B" and higher than average monsoon rains from May to July, which had led to saturated catchment areas and very high surface run-off levels in the days preceding the storm. Central LMB provinces recorded the highest flood water levels in the whole basin: in the capital Vientiane for example, flood levels were more than a meter higher

The agreed flood scenario for the Contingency Planning is in the 3 Southern river basins (Se Bangfai, Xe Don, Xe Banghiang) of Lao with the estimated caseload (people in need of humanitarian assistance) for a medium to large scale emergency is 100,000 people. (UNOCHA, 2017). In addition, Thailand's Mun River, located northeast with a 69,700-sq. km. catchment area in LMB. Similarly, to Laos, the estimate caseload for Thailand is 100,000 people

The workshop covered the following thematic areas that are considered relevant and highly critical to contingency planning (CP).

What is CP?

The session started by defining Contingency planning. It was defined as a process to prepare for and respond effectively to emergency addressing humanitarian needs of affected population. It was highlighted that CP considers a particular scenario as opposed to the response plan and the disaster management plan. This specific situation or event is foreseen, but may or may not happen.

The fundamental reason for contingency planning, to improve the quality of humanitarian response was stressed as well as the outright advantage of CP's planning in advance of an emergency which allows the NS to think through and address some critical questions.



The benefits of CP were deliberated on to the satisfaction of the participants. Briefly, these include:

- Contingency planning allows time to deal with anticipated problems before the onset of a crisis.
- Contingency planning provides an opportunity to identify constraints and focus on operational issues prior to the on-set of a crisis.
- An active contingency planning process enables branches and NS to establish working relationships that can make a critical difference during a crisis.
- Contingency planning allows NS/branches to put in place measures that enhance preparedness, ahead of a potential crisis.

Scenario Development

The main objective of this session was to make sure that participants are able to list the steps to scenario development and develop scenarios. Scenario was defined and illustrated by the facilitators. Participants showed appreciation of the concept. Having done that, scenario development, by which we mean the process of developing a scenario in anticipation of disaster, based on experience & early warning indicators,



was discussed. Having been warned of the challenges associated with scenario development (Scenario trap; Lack of flexibility or adaptability; Limited focus on impact of disaster on lives & livelihood), the participants were teamed up into three groups to develop scenarios pertaining to number of selected provinces.

Response Plan

The learning objectives of this session were that by the end of the session, the participants would be able to differentiate between a scenario, objective and a response. At the same time, they would as well be able to develop strategy and objectives for the scenarios in preparation of a contingency plan. Ideally, the participants would be expected to develop a response plan, which is an integral part of the CP.

By the end of the session, participants had undertaken activities that differentiated the three: scenario, objectives and response. Thus, the participants showed appreciation and understanding of the concepts and through the practical exercise they did in groups, they could come up with their own examples.



Resource Mapping

The principal objectives of the session included that participants are able to identify gaps in existing resources, clarify internal and external roles and responsibilities. The participants deliberated on all the forms of resources that are required, from human, material and financial.

During this session, it was noted that the RCRC [at both national & international levels] should take into account assistance being provided by other national and international organizations. This arises from the fact that NS at times has to respond to disasters that are beyond its capacities and should therefore make preparations for receiving and managing international assistance provided by the IFRC among others. In this respect, National Societies should conclude agreements on future mutual assistance in the event of disaster with sister societies from neighbouring countries. On their part, the IFRC will try to negotiate pre-disaster arrangements with the National Societies from the most disaster-prone countries, aimed at enhancing national disaster preparedness activities.

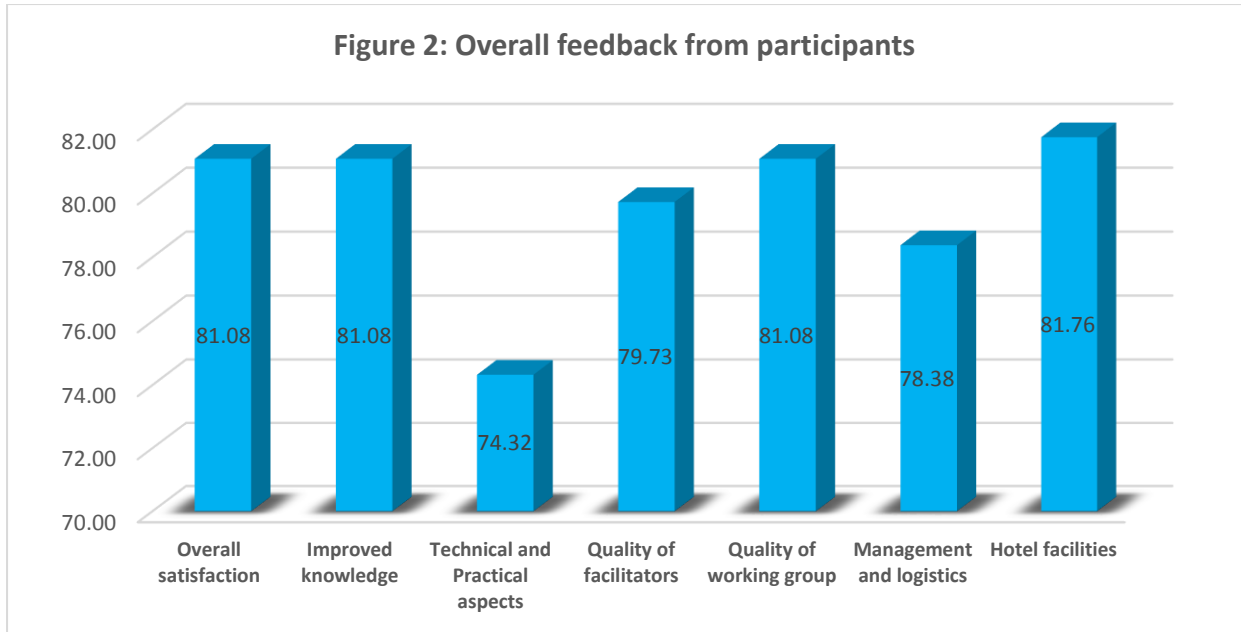
The methodology adopted for the workshop was to a greater extending participatory with participants working in groups. The participants were set into three teams right from the beginning these teams worked together right from the beginning until they came up with a contingency plan for their specific province with a unique scenario developed till they come up with eventually a contingency plan. The teams were strategically selected so that people with different skills made up a single team.

According to the participants the workshop methodologies adopted were best suited to facilitate better understanding and ability to apply the gained skills in the field at different levels. “As the role of Red Cross is to support government during disaster, it was a good practice to bring various stakeholders to discuss these plans. It is important to have good coordination mechanisms between Red Cross Chapter and government agencies”, said Ms. Naowarat Akepapan, Uttaradit Red Cross Chapter President, Thai Red Cross Society.

According to Mr. Sawanit Kongsiri, Assistant to Secretary General of the Thai Red Cross Society that “This workshop helps us to understand each other’s strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities to work together in the most sustainable way. Thai Red Cross would like to build on this and further replicate with other neighbouring countries in the future”,

“This is also a golden opportunity for our branches to exchange their direct contacts and coordinate at branch level to effectively mobilise resources to respond to future challenges”, added Mr. Thongphachanh Sonenasin, Vice President of Lao Red Cross Society.

Final evaluation saw 74 respondents providing their feedback and comments that most of participants had a positive feedback about the contingency plan workshop with overall satisfaction at 81.08% and contributed in improving their knowledge at 81.08%. 74.32% said that the technical and practical aspects planned well. In fact, 80 % felt that the team of facilitators was qualified. For quality of working group, management and logistics and hotel facilities, the respondents were satisfied at 81.08%, 78.38%, and 81.76% respectively.



Concluding the workshop, both Red Cross National Societies agreed to encourage and support cross-border cooperation at branch level through exchange visits and capacity building for effective disaster response and preparedness as well as health and care. It was also agreed that among several branches from both sides, pilot initiatives will be started to build a model for future replication.

Thanks to this successful initiative, the IFRC CCST will be working together with Lao RC, Thai RC, ICRC as well as potential donors to seek for financial and material support in supporting Red Cross branches of both sides to enhance their capacities and readiness in strengthening



Lao- Thailand Cross- Border Contingency Planning



DM system and procedure such Disaster Response Teams, Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs), Contingency Planning (CP), Early Warning/Early Action Systems, Logistics and Pre-positioning stocks so that the national societies can be the first responders to disasters of any size.

For further details of draft contingency plans (all in local languages), pls refer to Annexes