



Cross-Border Contingency Planning: Enhancing Cooperation between Red Cross National Societies of Thailand and Lao PDR

**Nongkhai, Thailand
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Background

Thailand and Lao PDR enjoy close and wide ranging cooperation in political, economic, social and cultural domains. In addition to long-standing ties and common borders, both countries share similar challenges and vulnerabilities, especially those related to natural disasters. Lao PDR and Thailand frequently experience droughts, storms, floods, heatwaves and other meteorological events that have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable populations and their livelihoods.

Before 2015 El Nino hit, Thailand was already suffering from up to 40 per cent depletion of water resources that became critically low in early 2016 resulting in loss of 800,000 tons of rice. The drought in Lao PDR, forced farmers to leave their fields and rice paddies unplanted causing an adverse effect on rice production and the livelihoods.

All these adverse meteorological effects dramatically reduce resilience of people and prompt them to seek better opportunities and new sources of livelihoods elsewhere. According to experts, the effects of El Nino will continue longer and increase vulnerabilities of millions of people, especially in countries with limited preparedness and response capacity. For a region at such high risk of slow onset and sudden disasters, building resilience and cross-border cooperation is not a question of choice, but rather a collective imperative.

Objectives of the cross-border contingency planning workshop

Red Cross National Societies of Thailand and Lao PDR support various cross-border initiatives concerning disaster risk reduction and disaster management, health and youth development.

The contingency planning process idea came in to reinforce the existing practices to ensure that a comprehensive and quality interventions to be taken to strengthen the capacities of branches along the Mekong River of both sides.

While building on the successes of bilateral processes between the two National Societies and taking stock of the outcomes of the first coordination meeting, the proposed cross-border contingency planning process aims to support Lao and Thailand Red Cross Societies to move forward on bilateral cooperation in a coherent and comprehensive manner. The expected outputs of the process are to:

- 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.).

Format and Methodology

The inaugural cross-border meeting for Lao PDR and Thailand will, among other objectives, help to test the methodology outlined above and if necessary, adapt it to the specific needs and recommendations of the National Societies and external partners that will be invited to attend.

The current provisional methodology is built around three days. The first day of the workshop will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of the external environment (common hazards vs. risks and vulnerabilities) and capacity needs of Red Cross, especially border branches, to effectively address the risks and vulnerabilities identified. The second day will be looking at possible scenarios which can jointly work together and mapping out our available resources and the last day will be working on response plan and working together with other stakeholders.

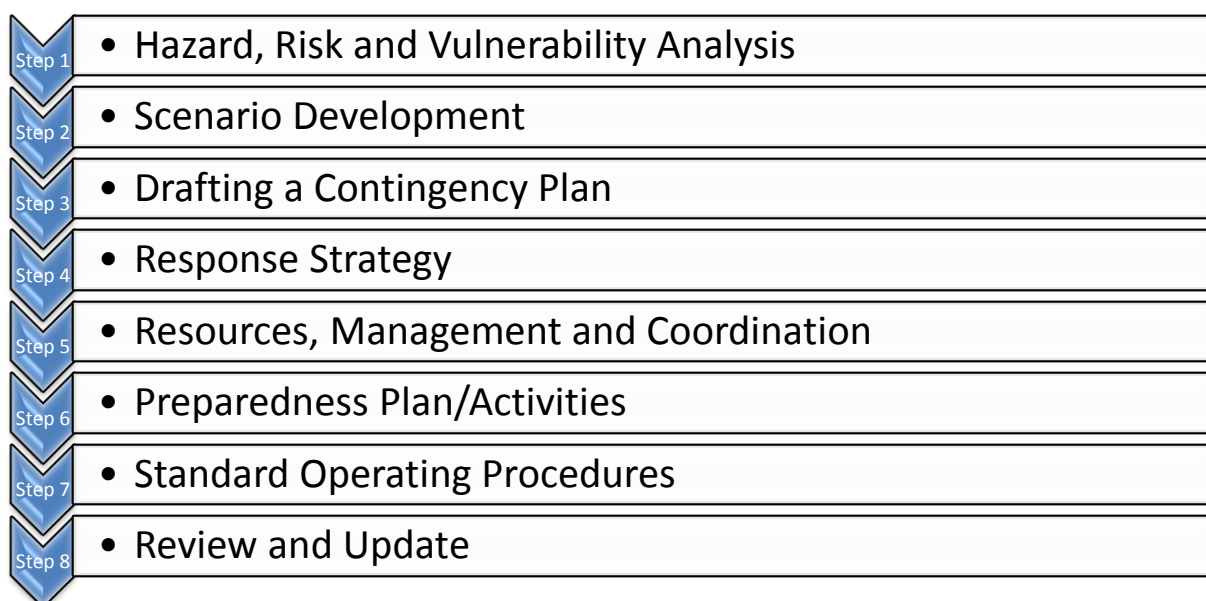


Figure 1- Suggested Contingency Planning Process

Target Audience

It is suggested that the contingency planning workshop shall be organized in 3 days with proposed following participants:

- Leadership representatives from Thai RC and Lao RC;
- Representatives of technical departments (DM, Health, OD/Youth, Communications, Logistics, Resource Mobilisation etc.);
- Representatives of 21 branches (12+9);
- Representative of Mekong River Commission;
- Experts from international and civil society organisations (ICRC, IOM, ADPC)
- Representative of NDMO/DDPM and Ministry of Health.