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**Work Plan – Thematic Working Group (TWG) on
Contingency Planning, Preparedness and Response in
Environmental Health Emergencies**

By: Thematic Working Group members on
Contingency Planning, Preparedness and Response in
Environmental Health Emergencies

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Work Plan – Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Contingency Planning, Preparedness and Response in Environmental Health Emergencies

1. Background:

The Environmental Health Country Profiles of the South-east and East Asian countries revealed that many are continuously experiencing health threats from deteriorating environment. They share common problems such as water pollution from domestic and industrial sources, urban air pollution, solid waste management, climate change and chemicals in the environment which has resulted in an estimated one million deaths every year in the region.

While there are efforts being made within the countries to minimize the environmental hazards and their associated health risks, the populations are also becoming more exposed to increasing occurrences of disasters in the region. These include recent disasters from natural hazards (e.g., typhoons, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions) and health emergencies like SARS – severe acute respiratory syndrome, and avian influenza, some of which affected lives of people in more than one country. The Asian tsunami left hundreds of thousands of people without access to safe water and sanitation. The outbreaks of SARS and avian influenza which occur through the transmission of pathogens initially from food, animals to humans and later from humans to humans were partly attributed to inadequate environmental sanitation and personal hygiene. In addition, with rapid industrial development, the number of technological emergencies, involving chemicals and radiation, is increasing. All these emergencies threaten human life and public health. Likewise, a transboundary event such as haze/smoke induced by forest fires in Sumatra and Kalimantan, Indonesia in 1997 blanketed Brunei, Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the southern parts of the Philippines and Thailand.

In the Philippines, there has been an observable increase in chemical incidents affecting the environment in the past 5 years, notable of which were the textile azo-dye poisoning affecting a community in Sapang Palay, poisoning from pesticide-contaminated cassava among school children in Bohol and the recent bunker oil spill in Guimaras.

Disasters may strike any time. The impact of its health consequences may be mitigated depending upon better contingency planning, preparedness and response measures. Similarities in the type of disasters and the transboundary nature of some environment and health issues that may lead to disasters require regional cooperation to prevent further outbreaks of disease, minimize mortality and maximize the use of limited resources.

This Thematic Working Group will be divided into two subgroups namely: (1) disasters from natural hazards and associated environmental health issues, such as water, sanitation, waste management, food safety, vector control, etc.; and (2) industrial or technological emergencies involving hazardous substances, such as toxic chemicals, flammable and explosive materials, radioactive materials, etc.

2. Objectives

The following objectives are generic and apply to both the subgroups:

- (1) To share information and data on contingency planning, preparedness and response in environmental health emergencies among member countries;
- (2) To improve the technical knowledge and skill among personnel of member countries on environmental health emergencies; and
- (3) To strengthen intercountry/regional cooperation in responding to environmental health emergencies.

3. Activities

Activity	Target date	Lead Country
Objective 1: To share information and data on contingency planning, preparedness and response in environmental health emergencies among member countries		
1.1 Develop a database (logistics, human resources, information) for the region	Q3/2007 – Q2/2008	Philippines & NPC, Malaysia
1.2 Create a website for sharing of information using existing regional TWG members as national focal point and capacity building of website as request mechanism. The website would be site for exchange of information and guide member countries in addressing environmental health emergencies. The information would include but not limited to e.g. available logistical supports from each member countries, lists of experts, available facilities, antidote stocking, etc.	Q3/2007 – Q3/2008	Philippines & NPC, Malaysia
1.3 Share risk communication messages on environmental health emergencies that has been used by TWG member countries through the website	Q1/2008	Philippines & NPC, Malaysia
1.4 Conduct regional technical symposium and update on environmental health emergencies. Regional forums will be done at least once a year for updates including sharing of best practices related to environmental health emergencies. Member countries will be encouraged to participate in these forums. Experts are also expected to be part of the forums.	Q4/2009	Vietnam
Objective 2: To improve the technical knowledge and skill among personnel of member countries on environmental health emergencies		
2.1 Develop training needs assessment for environmental health emergencies at all levels.	Q3/2007-Q2/2008	Philippines and WHO
2.2 Develop training programmes/modules	Q3/2007-Q3/2008	Philippines and WHO
2.3 Conduct training (Training of Trainers on Best Practice and Explicit Knowledge)	Q4/2008-Q2/2009	Vietnam
2.4 Monitor and Evaluate programmes	Q2/2010	Mongolia and Philippines
Objective 3: To strengthen intercountry/regional cooperation in responding to environmental health emergencies		
3.1 Review, assess and propose recommendations on existing	Q4/2008	Brunei

mechanisms on regional emergency response		
3.2 Develop risk communication messages for environmental health emergencies	Q1/2008-Q2/2008	Thailand and Cambodia

4. Outputs

- (1) A regional information network established; and
- (2) Technical knowledge and skill of key personnel in member states improved.
- (3) Intercountry/regional cooperation mechanisms on regional emergency response improved.

5. Monitoring and reporting

Outputs	Indicators
1. A regional information network established	(1) Development of a database for the region (Yes/No) and the number of member countries with access and using the database (2) Establishment of a web-page for regional information exchange (Yes/No) (3) Risk communication messages published in the website (Yes/No) (4) Conducted Regional Technical Symposium (Yes/No) and the number of Regional Symposia/Meetings conducted
2. Technical knowledge and skill of key personnel in member states improved	(1) Training Needs Assessment conducted (Yes/No) (2) Training Programmes/Modules developed (Yes/No and Number) (3) Number of trainings/study tours/attachments organized, and number of key personnel undertaking the training/study tours/attachments
3. Intercountry/regional cooperation mechanisms on regional emergency response improved.	(1) Assessment of existing mechanisms on regional emergency response conducted (Yes/No) (2) Risk communication messages developed and shared (Yes/No)

The monitoring and reporting of the progress of implementing the work plan will be carried out in the following ways:

- (1) Conduct of regular on-line conference -Quarterly on-line conference will be held among TWG members to discuss latest issues or development on environmental health emergencies including extent of implementation of the work plan.

(2) Perform annually an evaluation of the work plan, and submit an annual report to the Secretariat.

(3) Post the summaries of TWG meetings and evaluation reports on the web-site.

6. Resources

Outputs	Required Resources	Proposed Budget
1. A regional information network established	(1) <i>Compilation or inventory of existing information within the region</i>	USD 5,000
	(2) Experts to develop a system	USD 30,000
	(3) Conference facilities, resource persons, transportation, accommodation, meals honoraria	USD 80,000
2. Technical knowledge and skill of key personnel in member states improved	(1) Consultants (TNA)	USD 20,000
	(2) Experts in the field	USD 30,000
	(3) Conference facilities, resource persons	USD 200,000
	(4) Consultants (Monitoring and Evaluation)	USD 5,000
3. Intercountry/regional cooperation mechanisms on regional emergency response improved.	(1) Consultants to assess mechanisms of cooperation	USD 20,000
	(2) Consultants to develop health messages, IEC materials, media releases and campaign materials	USD 15,000