

**Work Plan – Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Contingency Planning,
Preparedness and Response in Environmental Health Emergencies
2010-2013**

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 that have resulted to an estimated one million deaths every year in the region.

According to the Annual Statistical Review 2008 made by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, China (29) and the Philippines (20) were most often hit by natural disasters in 2008. These two countries, together with Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand have occupied the top ranking countries with the highest number of disaster occurrence during the last three years. In 2008, two “mega-disasters” occurred, cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan Earthquake in China.

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, and H1N1 which brought significant morbidity and mortality among people. 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. One common fact is that disasters may strike any time anywhere.

In order to address these problems and challenges, the Regional Forum on Environmental and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries was established. The Charter of the Regional Forum, created a Thematic Working Group on Contingency Planning, Preparedness and Response in Environmental Health Emergencies to address environmental issues related to emergencies and disasters. 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 | Q4/2010 – Q4/2011 | Philippines & NPC, Malaysia |
| 1.2 Sharing of information using existing website of the regional forum. 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. | Q4/2010 – Q4/2013 | Philippines & NPC, Malaysia |
| 1.3 Share risk communication messages on environmental health emergencies that has been used by TWG member countries through the website | Q4/2010-Q4/2013 | Philippines, NPC, Malaysia & China |
| 1.4 Conduct regional technical symposium and update on environmental health emergencies. Regional forums will be done at least once every two years 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. | Q2/2011 and Q4/ 2013 | Vietnam & Philippines |
| Objective 2: To improve the technical knowledge and skill among personnel of member countries on environmental health emergencies | | |
| 2.1 Conduct Trainings on Environmental Emergencies including Environmental Health Risk Assessment Training | Q2/2011, Q3/2012 | Vietnam & China |
| 2.2 Updating of training programmes/modules | Q2/2012-Q4/2012 | Philippines and WHO |
| 2.3 Monitor and Evaluate training programmes | Q2/2013 | Mongolia and Philippines |
| Objective 3: To strengthen intercountry/regional cooperation in responding to environmental health emergencies | | |
| 3.1 Develop formal agreements on possible points of integration, cooperation and collaboration in building regional emergency response network among member countries | Q2/2012 | Philippines |
| 3.2 Develop risk communication messages for environmental health emergencies | Q1/2011-Q3/2011 | Thailand and Cambodia |

4. Outputs

- (1) A regional information network established; and
- (2) Technical knowledge and skill of key personnel in member countries 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) Risk communication messages published in the website (Yes/No) (3) 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) Number of trainings/study tours/attachments organized, and number of key personnel undertaking the training/study tours/attachments (2) Training Programmes/Modules updated (Yes/No and Number) |
| 3. Intercountry/regional cooperation mechanisms on regional emergency response improved. | (1) Formal agreements on possible points of integration, cooperation and collaboration signed (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 -Annual 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) Compilation or inventory of existing information within the region | USD 15,000 |
| | (2) Experts to develop a database system | USD 50,000 |
| | (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) Conference facilities, resource persons, transportation | USD 150,000 |
| | (2) Experts in the field | USD 15,000 |
| | (3) Consultants (Training module development) | USD 20,000 |
| | (4) Consultants (Monitoring and Evaluation) | USD 5,000 |
| 3. Intercountry/ regional cooperation mechanisms on regional emergency response improved. | (1) Consultants to facilitate the development of agreements | USD 20,000 |
| | (2) Consultants to develop health/risk communication messages, IEC materials, media releases and campaign materials | USD 35,000 |