



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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Thailand Country Report on Disaster Management

Similar to other countries, an occurrence of disaster in Thailand tends to increase both in terms of frequency and intensification due to the changes of environment condition. Simultaneously, it inevitably brought about the undesirable concomitances in various forms of disaster. A systematic disaster management is essentially required and must be in harmony with all policies and plans. In these recent years, the mechanism of disaster management system in Thailand, therefore, has been built and set in both national and regional levels in order to develop itself to respond to the emerged situation.

At the national level, Thailand has worked upon management structures for disaster preparedness arrangement through three areas; (1) the legal framework (related Acts), (2) the responsible agencies and focal points and (3) the national disaster management structure.

Starting from the legal framework, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) has acknowledged the importance of disaster management and subsequently restructured related laws and regulations by enacting **the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Act 2007** or DPM ACT 2007, the foundation of legal mechanism of Thailand's disaster management system. According to this Act, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) under the Ministry of Interior is stipulated as the core government department in handling national disaster management tasks.

Following by launching **the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan 2010-2014**, Thailand's disaster management system was formulated by focusing on three main parts; 1) Principles of Disaster Management 2) Disaster Countermeasure Procedure and 3) Security Threat and Countermeasure Procedure in managing both natural disasters, and national security issues.

In addition, flood is by far the worst disasters in Thailand in the year 2011. It began in the Northeast and Central Thailand early October due to abnormally late monsoon moisture, overflowed to the Chao Phraya River where the rivers meet the sea level, and affected Bangkok, while in the South were triggered by a tropical depression and monsoon rains. It killed more than 1,000 people, causing damage and loss in economic terms as industrial zones, rice fields, villages and towns have been destroyed. The severe flood situation in Bangkok and surrounding areas is consequently brought about the launch of **royal decree in the creation of National Catastrophe Insurance Fund 2012** to provide risk management caused by floods, earthquake and windstorm. The fund includes the insurance and reinsurance of household, Small and Medium Enterprises and industry sector.

Meanwhile, **the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM)**, under the Ministry of Interior, has been designated as the national focal point for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief. Disaster management operations are carried out through its 18 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Regional Centers nationwide and 76 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Provincial Officers.

To enhance information sharing and earthquake and tsunami early warning in Thailand, **the National Disaster Warning Center** has entered into cooperation agreements with several international organization such as, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) and United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) in collaboration with Pacific Disaster Centre (PDC).

Moving on to the third point, the national disaster management structure, the successful implementation of disaster management activities requires effective arrangement and cooperation from all sectors, government, military, private sector and civil society. Regarding the institutional arrangement, **the National Committee on Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (NCDPM)** has been set up and served as a policy making body on disaster management. This Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister and comprised of designated members from related Ministries and government agencies. Along this line, the Prime Minister has been empowered to command National Commander, Directors, government agencies, and local administrative organizations to handle disaster situation. However, when it comes to disaster emergency response particularly in large-scale disaster, the Minister of Interior is by law the Commander in-chief.

Nevertheless, Thailand's Disaster Management is still need to be developed and enhanced further due to the increasing dynamic of disaster our region faces in the past couple years. There are certain issues that we need to tackle to improve Thailand's Disaster Management; such as the lack of specific standard operating procedure and holistic approach in disaster management in all levels, the shortage of budget and basic equipments, the lack of support in disaster-related research and development and the lack of integrated cooperation among concerned agencies. In the near future, this system should be improved to be functional relevantly.

At the regional level, Thailand realizes the cooperation within the region as well as multi-sector is the key to enhance capacity in disaster preparedness and response. So far, the prevention and mitigation development has been arranged under the ASEAN framework, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). Four strategic components have been identified; namely Risk Assessment, Early Warning and Monitoring, Prevention and Mitigation, Preparedness and Response, and Recovery.

Together with Laos PDR, Thailand works mainly upon the activities of promoting disaster prevention and mitigation plan among ASEAN people. During the 19th ASEAN Summit in November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia, Thailand proposed the ASEAN Leader's Statement on Cooperation in Flood Prevention, Mitigation, Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation and the leaders signed the Agreement on the Establishment of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre or "AHA Centre" which will be the main mechanism of ASEAN in disaster management covering all kinds of large-scale disasters. Moreover, Thailand will chair the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management in year 2012.

According to the AADMER, another ASEAN mechanism in disaster management is a humanitarian assistant standard operation procedure which is called "Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operation: SASOP." Such mechanism should be utilized in all ASEAN Member State; and Thailand will implement the SASOP at the national level in the near future.

In conclusion, Thailand would like to suggest 3 main areas in improving our national and regional cooperation in disaster management

(1) **The building of disaster response management.** Thailand suggests that every part of society should know how to respond to disaster situation. Therefore, each country should promote “safety culture awareness” especially among local community members, local authorities, school students and teachers. AIPA Member Countries urgently need to push more public awareness and education and improve public safety of every sector particularly those who are living in risk by enhancing people’s understanding of the threats posed by various types of disasters.

(2) **The improvement of the national disaster management system.** Following the catastrophic tsunami disaster in 2004, Thailand took immediate action to establish National Disaster Warning Center, which covers the warning of both natural and man-made disasters. However, Thailand still needs to enhance the country’s disaster management capacity and efficiency through the mobilization of technical assistance from foreign countries, particularly from those with experiences and expertise. To improve the national early warning, we need an accurate and user-friendly early warning system, a common approach to risk assessment and damage analysis, and a tracking system for victims. Each country should improve the potential of the National Early Warning Centre.

(3) **The integration of warning system at regional levels**

- **The strong connectivity and information sharing among regional and national concerned agencies**

During the 19th ASEAN Summit in November 2011, the leaders signed the Agreement on the Establishment of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre or AHA Centre which will be the main mechanism of ASEAN in disaster management covering all kinds of large-scale disasters. Through AHA Centre, Thailand would like to see the integration of disaster management information among ASEAN Member States as well as the internal effort of each Member States to establish a stronger connectivity and information sharing system on disaster management. It is essential to develop such system through the current information communication technology, such as, SMS, facebook and twitter. During the disasters, these channels can be utilized as one of the most effective early warning, news release and social mobilization method to ensure rapid and effective disaster response.

- **The utilization of ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Cooperation of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operation (ASEAN SASOP)**

One of the challenges that AIPA Member Countries faced is the lack of the Standard Operation during the disaster response and relief which leads to the confusion during the disaster response and relief operations. ASEAN already has the SASOP and Thailand believes that if all AIPA Member Countries utilize it and adapt it to our national policy and procedure on disaster response and relief operation along with cooperation on AHA Centre. These will assist AIPA tremendously in helping our people in time.

- **The exchange of best practices and lesson learned**

Thailand would like to encourage AIPA member countries to share their experiences, knowledge, and expertise on any aspects of disaster management. The first step is to share

information on how the disaster management in each country works, or any other topics along that matter, through AIPA website. So, AIPA could help each other to prepare for the unforeseeable disasters. This also could be a good starting point in develop our long-term goal of collaboration in such issue among AIPA members.

- **The joint operation on humanitarian assistance**

Parliamentarians have an important role to play in enhancing both national and regional capacities in disaster management. ASEAN Member States should have domestic laws that accommodate regional joint operation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. At regional level, AIPA should contribute to the efforts on harmonization of rules and regulations that will allow delivery of assistance to affected ASEAN Member States in an effective and timely manner.