
Management of Natural Disasters with Local Community as Centre

The Fourth National Health Assembly

Having considered the report on Management of Natural Disasters with Local Community as Centre¹,

Noting that natural disasters tend to occur often in Thailand whether they are of the types that are immediate and cause serious damages or the types that are predictable and cause extensive damages, that there are seven types of disasters, i.e. flood and land and mud slide, tropical cyclone, earthquake, tsunami, big flood, drought and forest fire and haze, causing enormous losses of life and property as well as economic, social and environmental losses each year,

Aware that natural hazard management is a task beyond any public agency to tackle alone, that there are limitations in the development of the National Preparedness Plan and that efficient measures are still found wanting, e.g. the warning system, planning of prevention and systematic problem solving, drills by prevention and problem-solving agencies, unified command in the face of the event, and proper understanding of the personnel operating in normal or critical situations, thus making it very difficult to manage emergency situations in a concrete and efficient manner,

Concerned that society and local community do not have adequate knowledge and understanding or their existing body of knowledge is not sufficient to tackle the complexity of the problem and diversity of natural disasters, thus making it difficult to come up with correct and appropriate measures to prevent and handle such public dangers as disasters,

Worried that the government is still not clear about the concept of management of natural disasters with local community as centre and does not have specific policy for each type of disasters, that the regulations and laws relevant to the prevention of public dangers, land use, and building control are not effectively implemented, that too little importance is attached to the issue of natural disaster management by community, and that little lesson has been learnt about how to work in the face of each disaster, thus resulting in little improvement when they have to tackle other similar situations,

Has, therefore, passed the following resolutions:

1. Requesting the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Board, with the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation serving as Secretariat, to be the lead agency working in conjunction with the Office of Economic and Social Development Board, Emergency Medical Institution of Thailand, National Health Security Office, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Ministry of Education, National Security Council, Space Technology and Information Centre, Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Transport, Community Organizations Development Institute, National Municipal League of Thailand, National Association of Provincial Administrative Organizations of Thailand, and National Association of Tambon Administrative Organizations of Thailand to carry out the following:

1.1 Put in place a process to review and improve the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan by involving the participation of all sectors, attach importance to the management of natural disasters by local community as centre, and take into consideration vulnerable groups, making sure to include in their consideration the Proposed Guidelines for the Improvement of National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan with Local Community as Centre as seen in the annex to the main document (Health Assembly 4/Main 4/Annex 1);

1.2 Develop mechanisms and systems for budgetary support and/or funds at every level with flexible management structures in the implementation of disaster prevention and mitigation plans at every level with local community as centre.

¹ Document Health Assembly 4/Main 4

2. Requesting every type of local government agency in every locality, especially risk areas, with the support of the Ministry of Interior, to develop preparedness plans for local community networks to cope with natural disasters as well as disasters caused by local development structures, to focus on the participatory process of the people sector and local community networks, to take into consideration gender roles in disaster management and inter-connections of the areas, covering the target districts as a whole, and to allocate budgets of the locality, local health security funds or any other fund to subsidize the work of the networks, outlined as follows:

2.1 Development of preparedness systems including development of information systems, management of town planning, and drill

2.2 Prevention and impact reduction including watershed management

2.3 Management of emergency and public healthcare

2.4 Rehabilitation, including ensuring the availability of the four basic necessities, i.e. construction of temporary shelters, food and drink, healthcare, and environment, to the accepted universal standard

2.5 Support of disaster management networks of local community and society by creating safety awareness and conflict management in dealing with disasters, taking into consideration various target groups, such as vulnerable groups.

3. Requesting the government to establish a national fund and a fund management committee drawn from various sectors to support the establishment of mechanisms for disaster management, management of logistic support, evacuation of victims, development of local preparedness plans, and promotion of disaster management in other areas, especially at the local community level, by issuing Prime Minister Office regulations and by entrusting the Emergency Medical Institution of Thailand together with the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation to act the lead agency in the implementation.

4. Requesting the government and other agencies concerned to support the establishment and development of various funds and mechanisms to coordinate the cooperation of disaster works in the sub-district/geographically ecological areas, such funds being either new creations or part of the existing ones in the local community, and to deal with immediate problems and post-disaster rehabilitation as well as allocating additional budget to disaster funds initiated by local communities.

5. Requesting Thailand Research Fund (TRF) to support universities, academic agencies, non-governmental organizations, community networks and local communities or multi-sector groups to undertake research and create a body of knowledge on disasters as well as to collect all the knowledge and opinions gleaned from a multitude of lessons and experiences of the people sector, including health and environmental assessments and causes of disasters that happen as a result of the state policy, with a view to supporting policy decision making and management at every level.

6. Requesting the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to allocate sufficient frequency waves for use for television, broadcasting radio and radio communication in coping with natural disasters in particular with the involvement of public agencies and non-profit private organizations concerned and to ensure that they have appropriate potentials to undertake the tasks, as well as providing budgetary support for the procurement of communications equipment for community organizations responsible for disaster management.

7. Requesting Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) to support the development of diverse networks of civic volunteers to handle disasters at the local community level as well as the national level, including systematic disaster knowledge management and dissemination of necessary knowledge to the public in disaster-hit situations in the central and regional areas,

8. Requesting Provincial Disaster Prevention and Management Offices to act as lead agencies in conjunction with health assembly members in the risk areas in every province to support the organization of area-specific health assemblies together with academic agencies and local community with a view to bringing about disaster management work in a concrete manner, e.g. establishing provincial disaster training centres.

9. Requesting the Ministry of Education and education institutes, both formal and informal, to develop curricula on disasters with participation from all sectors and to provide education on the subject at every level.

10. Requesting the government to review the structure of disaster management and put in place an administrative centre with public and independent status working as a unifying unit responsible to the Prime Minister and serving as a liaison agency between the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Thai Meteorological Department, National Disaster Warning Centre, disaster volunteer networks in the academic sector, Department of Mental Health, Emergency Medical Institution of Thailand, and other agencies concerned, including administrative centres at regional, provincial, district and sub-district levels.

11. Requesting the Secretary-General of the National Health Committee to report the progress to the Fifth and Sixth National Health Assemblies.