

Mitigating Crisis by an Effective Communication Approach: A Case Study of Thailand's 2011 Great Flood

Nareenoot Damrongchai*

Abstract

Though the amount of damage incurred each year varies, flooding is a recurrent natural disaster that causes extreme damage in Thailand. However, despite this frequency of flood hazard, the corresponding capacity of related organizations to manage the situation seems to be inadequate from many perspectives. The ability to communicate to the public necessary information about the impending hazard is clearly one skill which calls for urgent improvement. As well, organizational recognition that effective crisis communication is a key factor in the mitigation of damage caused by the crisis is absolutely imperative. This case study of Thailand's 2011 great flood crisis will facilitate student learning about flood (disaster) management policy decision making in order that the best measures for effective crisis situation management might be discerned. The study focuses on the necessity to properly merge crisis communication into the overall structure of disaster management. Besides, using this focus will enhance student awareness of the advantage of timely crisis communication preparation, as well as the adverse effects of an unskilled crisis communication approach.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Disaster Risk Reduction, Flood, Thailand

* Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Language and Communication (GSLC)
National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)
118 Moo 3 Sereethai Road, Klong-Chan, Bangkok 10240, THAILAND.
E-mail: nareenoot.damrongchai@gmail.com

การบรรเทาภาวะวิกฤติด้วยการสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพ: กรณีศึกษามหาอุทกภัยในประเทศไทยปี 2554

นริษุช คำรงค์ชัย*

บทคัดย่อ

แม้ระดับความเสียหายที่เกิดขึ้นจะแตกต่างกันไป แต่อุทกภัยถือได้ว่าเป็นภัยธรรมชาติที่เกิดขึ้นบ่อยครั้งมากที่สุด และสร้างความเสียหายให้กับประเทศไทยอย่างต่อเนื่องทุกปี อย่างไรก็ตาม อาจกล่าวได้ว่าระดับความสามารถในการรับมือกับสถานการณ์อุทกภัยของหน่วยงานต่าง ๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง ยังจำเป็นต้องได้รับการพัฒนาและปรับปรุงในอีกหลายด้าน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในประเด็นเกี่ยวกับระดับความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับอุทกภัยสู่สาธารณะ และการให้ความสำคัญกับแนวทางการสื่อสารในภาวะวิกฤติ อันถือเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญประการหนึ่งในการที่จะบรรเทาความเสียหายอันสืบเนื่องจากสถานการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้น กรณีศึกษานี้ได้หยิบยกสถานการณ์มหาอุทกภัยที่เกิดขึ้นในปี 2554 มาใช้ในการเรียนรู้สำหรับทำการตัดสินใจเชิงนโยบาย เพื่อหาแนวทางในการรับมือกับสถานการณ์ภัยพิบัติที่เกิดขึ้นให้ได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ โดยมุ่งให้ความสำคัญกับการนำกระบวนการการสื่อสารในภาวะวิกฤติมาใช้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งในการบริหารจัดการภัยพิบัติ ประกอบกับสร้างความเข้าใจให้ผู้เรียนเล็งเห็นถึงความสำคัญของการเตรียมแผนการสื่อสารเพื่อรับมือกับสถานการณ์ภัยพิบัติ ตลอดจนผลกระทบจากการขาดการเตรียมความพร้อมในด้านการสื่อสารในภาวะวิกฤติที่อาจเกิดขึ้น

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* ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ คณะภาษาและการสื่อสาร สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ (นิด้า)
118 ถนนเสรีไทย คลองจั่น บางกะปิ กรุงเทพฯ 10240
อีเมล: nareenoot.damrongchai@gmail.com

Not long after recovering from severe floods in 2010, Thailand was hit by a series of tropical storms that caused flash flooding in many provinces beginning from May 2011. The prolonged flooding increased the severity of the situation and resulted in the major actors related with the “flood” becoming the target of the media. The world also closely monitored the situation via the international media. The disaster indiscriminately damaged property and impacted the lives of those who live in the 65 provinces of the 76 provinces in the country that were affected. Accommodation units, agricultural land, industrial complexes, hospitals, airports and even important governmental offices went underwater, while people began to panic. Not only did conflicts arise between those in charge of flood management, scholars and specialists went out to give their own commentary of the situation. Mainstream media in Thailand such as television and newspapers covered the floods as headline news, criticizing the performance of the government in managing the crisis, and portraying themselves as the rescuers. Everyone wanted to speak out, and rumors circulated widely, while everyone wanted to become a “hero.” Different actors made contradictory statements which finally resulted in the situation lacking a unified response and information sharing not being under control.

Realizing the importance of disaster management and the continued well-being of people in the country, especially when massive floods are approaching Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, the Prime Minister had to prioritize two important issues. Firstly, how to minimize the damage caused by the flood effectively, and secondly, how to restore the country’s credible image among both Thai nationals as well as foreigners, and rehabilitate the country’s reputation as “the land of smiles”, thus restoring the confidence of foreign investors and returning the country’s economic system back to normal.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that the government has several disadvantages. Firstly, the cabinet had just been elected at the outset of the disaster, secondly, all operations had to be managed in the midst of serious political conflict, a conflict that had torn Thailand into two separate sides: the yellow shirts and the red shirts.¹ Under these circumstances, the Prime Minister not only had to focus on the best way to manage the flood technically, including the rescue and evacuation of victims, it was also important to consider the best strategy to be able to overcome the disadvantages and disorderly conditions, with the overall goal of restoring the country’s credibility and reliability among Thai nationals and foreigners. The following information

is important factors the Prime Minister may need to consider in order to find the best strategy for the sake of the country.

Natural Disasters: The World Situation

When reviewing statistics about the occurrence of natural disasters over the last century, it is obvious that the number of natural disasters as well as the damage they do to the world economy is dramatically increasing (see Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2). As shown in Exhibit 3, among those disasters occurring in the last decade, general floods, tropical storms, mass earth movements, grand scale earthquakes and bacterial infectious diseases have tended to occur more frequently. On the other hand, as shown in Exhibit 4, the data indicates that when separating the number of natural disasters by continent, Asia has the highest frequency of disasters since 1980s. Since the number of people affected by natural hazards keeps increasing, there is growing recognition by governments and other organizations that building resilient communities and reducing disaster risk is a core initiative. Several international organizations such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) have been established to support and coordinate this movement aiming to prevent and mitigate damages caused by natural disasters. Also many countries around the world have their own concrete disaster management system in order to cope with any emergency situation resulting from a natural disaster. For detailed definitions of important terms, see Exhibit 5.

Natural Disaster: Thailand Situation²

Even though Thailand has a low risk of serious natural disaster, such as a major earthquake or volcano eruption, people in the country still suffer from flood and drought almost every year. The top ten natural disasters that have affected Thailand sorted by numbers of total people affected were caused by drought and flood only (see Exhibit 6). The country has frequently flooded almost every year since at least 1989 and it can be concluded that floods are the worst type of disasters for Thailand. Between 2002 and 2010 floods killed more than 1,000 people and brought damage and loss in economic terms of more than 40 billion Baht. For more details about damage caused by floods in Thailand, see Exhibit 7.

In 2010, one year before the occurrence of the great flood crisis, Thailand had to deal with floods that hit different areas in the country. The death toll in the country stood at 266 people, and 3,917,333 households with more than 8 million people were affected. Due to the flood, property and infrastructure of villages in effected area were widely destroyed.

Other natural disasters that occurred and claimed hundreds of lives and caused enormous material losses in Thailand during 2002-2008 were storms. The damage caused by storms will vary according to wind speed and intensity of rainfall. If a storm is categorized as a depression, it produces the torrential rains accompanied by floods. In the case of tropical cyclones or typhoons, phenomena such as torrential rains will exacerbate flooding, and the strong winds can threaten maritime navigation and may inflict a heavy death toll and material losses. Thailand has been prone to these types of natural disaster and has occasionally witnessed a multitude of storms. Details of historical storm occurrence in Thailand can be seen in Exhibit 8.

Global phenomenon such as climate change influences local weather, e.g. a shifting of rainy season or summer, and more extreme floods and droughts, which means that managing water resources or flood and drought disaster is more complicated. Particularly during the periods of November 2009 to June 2010, many parts of Thailand received consistently below average rainfalls due to a belated rainy season coupled with the limited volume of water in the large scale reservoirs and dams, which resulted in water scarcity for consumption and for agriculture. However, in September and October of the same year, the central part of Thailand suffered from flooding due to the intense rainfall. The data shown in Exhibit 9 reveals drought statistics and its impact on Thailand during 2002-2010.

Not only natural disaster such as flood and drought, Thailand has witnessed an increasing occurrence and intensity of mudslides simultaneously or accompanies with flashflood due to various preconditions and contributing factors particularly the anthropogenic activities such as deforestation, cultivation of cash crops in a sloping area, destruction of a land's surface etc. Also during the period of October to February, the cold weather front from China will prevail over Thailand leading to the drop in temperature and chilly weather in the lowland area with particular cold weather on the highland area. A cold spell can affect the people's daily life and can cause cold weather related illness such as respiratory disease, influenza, and

animal epidemic etc. Thailand also experienced an unprecedented tragic incident occurred when Tsunamis triggered by a submarine earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia on December 26, 2004. It claimed thousands of lives of both Thai and Foreigners and has orphaned more than 1,200 children.

Disaster Management in Thailand

In 2002, Thailand established the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM), under the Ministry of Interior, as the principal agency for disaster management to mitigate the damage caused by disasters. To manage a possible disaster more effectively, DDPM shall coordinate with other agencies such as: the Meteorological Department (TMD), Ministry of Information Technology, Royal Irrigation Department (RID), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment, and other related organizations depending on disaster type.

Structure of Disaster Management System³

When the Indian tsunami struck Thailand's southern provinces in 2004, the country revealed its disaster management system to the international community. Minister of Interior, as the Chair of the National Civil Defense Committee and the Commander-in-Chief of National Civil Defense, played a vital role in the coordination among various government agencies and other parties concerned with the aftermath of the disaster. A large number of meetings were convened where all parties concerned attended to discuss the issues faced during the response, rehabilitation and recovery phases. This leadership was guided by the "Civil Defense Act 1979".

However, due to its outdated features and disadvantages, the Civil Defense Act 1979 was terminated and replaced by the "Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DPM) Act 2007" which entered into force on 19 November 2007. Thailand's disaster management system has been based on the 2007 Act ever since.

The DPM Act 2007 has the provisions regarding the institutional arrangement as follows:

(1) The National Committee on Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (NCDPM) serves as a policy making body. It is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Committee comprises 34 members, designated from ministries, agencies and organizations related to disaster management.

(2) The Minister of Interior is by law the Commander-in-Chief when it comes to disaster emergency response, particularly in large-scale disasters.

(3) The Director General of the DDPM is by law the Secretary General of the NCDPM.

(4) The Director General, under the DPM Act 2007, is the Incident Commander when a disaster takes place.

In the National Plan, the role of the person in charge is clearly indicated and delineated into four levels determined by seriousness of a disaster (Exhibit 10).

National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan (2010-2014)⁴

The first part of this master plan related to the principles of disaster management which comprises nine chapters including disaster situations in Thailand, disaster management and related policy, impact reduction, preparedness arrangements, post-disaster management, roles of related organizations (clearly classified into “key operating agency”, “supporting agency”, and “disaster relief and rehabilitation agency”) and structure of chain of command and coordination in order to put the plan into action. For more details about duties and responsibilities of related agencies in disaster management, see Exhibit 11.

The second part focuses on disaster standard operating procedures and countermeasures. This part comprises fourteen chapters separated by type of disaster which includes flood and landslide, tropical cyclone, fire, chemical and hazardous material, transport hazard, drought, cold spell, forest fire and haze, earthquake and building collapse, tsunami, human epidemic, plant disease and pest, animal and aquatic animal epidemics, and information technology threat.

The last part relates to national security issues focusing on security threats and countermeasure procedures and includes five chapters on security threat, sabotage actions, mine and land mine threats, air threats and protests and riots.

There is also a National Master Plan for Disaster Prevention and Mitigation for the year 2010-2014. This is a framework and guideline covers all sectors of the society from local to national levels, compelling each body to take into account the conducting of disaster prevention and mitigation activities not only during a disaster but also before and after disaster occurs.

Thailand after the Tsunami Crisis⁵

Early Warning System

Thailand has a National Disaster Warning Center with the major task of detecting earthquakes and analyzing seismic data to determine the possibility of tsunami generation before issuing notification messages to the public, related authorities and responders responsible for the evacuation of people to safe locations. There are over 100 towers installed along the vulnerable coastline of the south, and many more planned in the areas prone to floods and landslides in the north. These towers can be activated remotely and will also be able to broadcast warning information in five languages in consideration of foreign tourists. The same warning is communicated through multiple channels such as loud speakers, SMS, radio, telephone, fax, TV, and news media simultaneously to ensure redundancy, reach into remotest areas, and clarity of the information.

Overall Disaster Readiness

The DDPM attempts to create as many volunteers such as the “Civil Defense Volunteer” and “Mr. Warning”⁶ as possible across the country. Currently, there are over a million Civil Defense Volunteers, and almost 10,000 trained Mr. Warnings. The Prevention and Mitigation Academy (DPMA) established by Ministry of Interior is now a principle educational institution in the disaster management field. The academy was initially aimed to train DDPM’s own officials, and since then other government and nongovernment stakeholders have become involved. For example, local administrative authorities are trained in search and rescue, and “One Tambon One Search and Rescue Team” (OTOS)⁷ are formed. DDPM needs to ensure that its collaboration with ministries continues, and that changes to policies such as incorporation of disaster risk reduction into development planning are addressed simultaneously.

Related to the readiness of other ministries, the various departments and ministries responsible are supposed to be well coordinated under the umbrella of the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan in which their roles are spelled out. Individual agencies and ministries will prepare detailed plans accordingly. The health sector preparedness for emergencies was seen in a good light because of their response to the tsunami—many of the international teams that came in found that they had no work, as all necessary steps and precautions had already been taken by the national and local health authorities. But other than the mainline ministries, the incorporation of risk reduction in routine development activities on a sustained basis is still only beginning. On the other hand, the roles and responsibilities of the military are spelled out in the Civil Defense Plan at various levels, and it is well integrated in the response systems. This is under the coordination of the relevant civil defense directors.

The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society in emergencies has been growing stronger since the tsunami, where they played a substantial role. NGOs are primarily involved in the response or relief operations and, to an extent, in preparedness. The Ministry of Interior has also assigned DDPM to train at least 2% of the population, or around 1.2 million volunteers. Consequently, the DDPM has to collaborate with NGOs such as the Thai Red Cross Society, especially for Community-Based Disaster Risk Management or CBDRM activities.

2011 Flood Crisis: A Chronology

With the monsoon season well underway in 2011, rainfall began falling with regularity from May, and major flooding began as Tropical Storm Nock-ten caused heavy precipitation in Northern and Northeastern Thailand as well as flash flooding in many provinces. Within a week 13 people had been reported dead, with ongoing flooding in the provinces of Chiang Mai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phrae, and Uttaradit in the North, and Bung Kan, Nakhon Phanom, Nong Khai, Sakon Nakhon and Udon Thani in the upper Northeast. The upper-central provinces of Phichit, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai were also flooded as the resulting water spread down the overflowing Yom and Nan Rivers. Prachuap Khiri Khan on the gulf coast was also affected. Flooding was still ongoing in late August, as heavy rains were expected to continue longer than usual due to the effect of La Niña. Floodwaters reached 50cm in downtown Nan, the highest

recorded in 16 years in Phitsanulok Province, while large areas in the downstream provinces of Nakhon Sawan, Ang Thong, Ayutthaya and Nakhon Nayok were being increasingly affected. The death toll rose to 37 by 22 August. The Bhumibol and Sirikit Dams were increasing discharge rates to compensate for incoming flow.

By the middle of September, almost all lower central provinces were being affected by flood, i.e., Uthai Thani, Chai Nat, Sing Buri, Ang Thong, Suphan Buri, Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani and Nonthaburi, the last two of which sit on the northern border of Bangkok. Broken floodgates resulted in water from the Chao Phraya flowing through irrigation canals and inundating large areas of paddy fields in Singburi, Ang Thong and Ayutthaya, but lessening the strain on Bangkok as the fields served as water retention areas. Boats were employed to run against the river flow while anchored in an attempt to increase the river's discharge rate.

By the beginning of October, most dams were already near capacity and being forced to increase their rates of discharge, potentially worsening downstream flooding. Flooding in Ayutthaya worsened as flood water entered the city proper, inundating the Ayutthaya Historical Park and forcing evacuations. Barriers protecting industrial estates failed, resulting in flooding of dozens of major factories and country-wide disruption of manufacturing supply chains. In Nakhon Sawan, the sandbag barrier protecting the city was breached, resulting in rapid flooding of the city. Hundreds of patients had to be transferred out of Ayutthaya and Nakhon Sawan Regional Hospitals by boat as water levels rose over the hospital floors and power supplies and life support systems were disrupted. More information on total area flooded by month and flooding situation can be seen in Exhibit 12 and Exhibit 13.

Impacts on National Investment and Tourism

Due to the continuing flood crisis, schools had to close, agricultural and historical areas were damaged, and the economies of both Thailand and other countries become significantly impacted. The news of Thailand's great flood resulted in international organizations providing help, while investors all over the world became conscious of the gravity of the situation and started to reconsider their investment in Thailand and whether to move it to another country.

Some foreign investors began to complain that the government were neither providing necessary information, nor providing an explicit flood management strategy to help foreign companies, both of which are crucial for developing company prevention measures. As a result, the country lost its credibility as a reliable manufacturing base. Rumors about the withdrawal of foreign business were widespread (see more information in related news in Exhibit 14).

Pressure from Mass Media and Unmanageable Information

When the first flooding occurred in the North of Thailand, it was not viewed as unusual as it happens each year, and people were not aware of the severity of the situation. Gradually, as the great mass of water moved closer to Bangkok, the awareness of people, both the Thai nationals and foreigners, dramatically increased. People started to talk only of the flood situation and whether their area will be flooded or not and, if so, how seriously.

Several government spokespeople responsible for dealing with flooding disseminated information to the public. However, different spokespeople gave different information which resulted in public confusion. Some even promised the public that they can manage the situation very well and asked the people not to worry about anything. But, finally, everything ended with the opposite result from what the government had promised, resulting in a lose of faith by the populace in the government.

As the people became concerned with the flood situation and lost trust in the government, the mass media concentrated on the issue 24 hours a day. They repeatedly broadcast scoops about the flood in different areas, invited academics to comment on the government performance as well as to predict and estimate the future direction of the flood. Accordingly, there was many “flood specialists” with a range of management ideas, solutions, and information.

The situation became even worse when rumors concerning the flood and the conflict among those who working on flood management spread. As a result, the 24-hour broadcast of television coverage, the uncontrollable flow of contradictory information, and the spread of rumors resulted in increased tension among those who live in Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

Apart from the effort of government, the mass media also started to act as a rescue team, taking food and survival kits to those effected by the flood. But not only the mass media, local and international NGOs, international organizations, and even popular actors lent a hand to rescue victims of the historic flood. Government agencies were seen to be the last actor to arrive at the scene, and the last actor the public choose to rely on.

Criticism of the Government's Flood Management Performance⁸

The hazard caused by the flood triggered long running chaos which lasted for almost half a year and became one of the largest ever major crises to happen in Thailand. Along with the water hazard, the following episodes deepened the situation and increased the seriousness. More events and news relating to the great flood of 2011 can be seen in Exhibit 14.

Uncontrollable force: as previously noted, Thailand experienced serious political turmoil. A former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's youngest sister, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, from Pheu Thai Party, had just been appointed after the flood event occurred in the Northern part of Thailand. She had no experience in the political arena and did not have enough power to control those veteran politicians who manipulated behind the scenes at some major ministries. Moreover, some governors had been appointed by the former government of the Democrat Party which was now in opposition. All these factors magnified the challenges and difficulties faced by Prime Minister in managing the situation effectively.

Conflict between the governing party and the opposition party: when the water came closer to Bangkok, the conflict between the government and the oppose party became more serious since the governor of Bangkok, M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, belongs to the Democrats. One of the conflicts that appeared in the headlines was the dispute between the government and Bangkok Governor over who was in charge of flood management in Bangkok.

Political based support: one of the reasons for public criticism came from rumors of unequal support provided by the government. It has been reported that people who support the red shirt, those who are on Pheu Thai Party side, received better assistance and received more donations than those who were not. The rumors spread quickly and the government was strongly criticized.

Lack of information: the closer the water approached Bangkok, the more concerned people became. Everyone wanted more information, especially information about when, where, and how serious the flood will be in each area. People in need of information were not only Thai nationals such as farmers, businessman, students, officers, but also tourists and foreigners who have business investments here. However, the government did not provide the public the information needed as there was not enough information that could be presented on time.

Incorrect information: beside the reality that there was not enough information provided to the public, some information released by the government was inaccurate and resulted in public panic. As a consequence of the inaccurate and misleading information, the government deeply disappointed the public.

Late response: no matter how hard the government tried to provide equal support to flood victims, the government seemed to be the last actor to reach the scene. As a consequence, complaints about delays or even total lack of the government support were commonplace. People started to rely on support from other organizations such as NGO, the mass media or international organizations instead.

Not professional: the government tried to apply different communication channels to distribute necessary information to the public. However, the outcome of its attempts were unsuccessful. For example, the daily press conference became a focus of criticism due to the poor selection of spokespersons that used a series of technical terms. Social media which were believed to be the most effective media to communicate with the public became a battleground of dispute as there was no official responsible as webmaster. Most of all, no specific messages were sent to specific stakeholders and the government was unable to control the disorder caused by miscommunications.

A lack of unity in flood management and all of the above factors exacerbated the situation. Without doubt, if the government continues to ignore these factors, the government will lose credibility not only among Thai nationals but also among the global community in the future.

Thailand: A Decade of Crises⁹

Since 2004, Thailand has faced several crises that have severely impacted the country's economic system as a whole. The crises are summarized below:

Year 2004: Avian flu pandemic

The outbreak of avian flu first took place 2004, but the pandemic continued into 2005. Not only had the outbreak frightened Thai residents but also international travelers and tourists, especially those from East Asian countries, which collectively constituted a large portion of overseas arrivals. Compared to February 2003, inbound tourist arrivals in February 2004 decreased by more than 107,000, or 11.61%, causing a loss in revenues of over 4,000 million Baht over the course of just one month.

Year 2004: the tsunami

One of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history occurred after midnight on December 25, 2004 triggered by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean. A series of devastating tsunamis struck the coast and islands bordering the Indian Ocean, killing 230,000 people in 14 countries which included local residents and up to 9,000 foreign tourists. In consequence of the earthquake, the aftershocks and the tsunami, tourists hesitated to return to the affected regions for psychological reasons. Even resorts on the Pacific coast of Thailand, which were completely untouched, were hit by cancellations.

Year 2005 (onwards): Domestic political turmoil

From the outset of the second term of Thaksin Shinawatra¹⁰ in 2005 through 2010, Thailand was destabilized by years of political turmoil. Since 2005, increasing mass demonstrations on both sides of the political divide, anti-Thaksin and pro-Thaksin, had disrupted tourism and business activities in the country, especially in Bangkok and surrounding areas. The turmoil directly affected the tourism industry and the economy, as well as the image of Thailand. The situation can be chronologically listed as follows:

In 2008, the anti-Thaksin protesters, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), held a lengthy rally at Government House. Many PAD protesters were killed or injured, frequently by guns and bombs from unknown shooters, but also in their confrontation with the police on bloody October 7, 2008. Later, the PAD rallied at the two international airports in Bangkok, Don Muang and Suwannabhumi International Airport, on November 25, 2008. As a result, the Airports of Thailand (AOT) decided to close both airports on that day. The airports were fully reopened on December 6. The closing of the airports by AOT provoked a serious tourism and economical

crisis. All flights from Suwannabhumi were cancelled. Around 3,000 passengers were stranded in the airport terminals, while over 100,000 were stranded in hotels in town.

In 2009, pro-Thaksin protesters, the UDD, allied with a pro-Thaksin political party, the Puea Thai Party (PTP) triggered further political turmoil. Almost immediately after the Democrat Party¹¹ formed a new government coalition with an elite Prime Minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva¹² on December 17, 2008, the UDD began mass rallies attacking Abhisit's government as undemocratic and attempting to topple it. In its first act of protest, the UDD occupied the Victory Monument circle in the center of downtown Bangkok on April 8, 2009, afterward, on April 11, 2009, the UDD went to Pattaya, a tourism area about 140 km from Bangkok, to try to prevent the government's hosting of the 2009 ASEAN summit. The failure to control the UDD in Pattaya led to the critical evacuation by several world leaders and the humiliating cancellation of a prestigious summit.

On April 12, 2009, in downtown Bangkok, the UDD occupied several main roads. A state of emergency for Bangkok and surrounding areas was declared due to the heightened escalation of tensions between the protesters and the police. The UDD set fires on many buses and major streets and made threats with harmful gas trailers and weapons in several places in downtown Bangkok. The army, by the order of the government, dispersed the protesters. On April 14, 2009, the protesters stopped the rallies and were sent back to their home safely by the government.

In 2010, one year after the situation, the UDD returned to Bangkok on March 14, 2010 for a fresh round of protests aimed at forcing the Abhisit government to step down and call new elections. On April 3, 2010, the UDD occupied important business areas and shopping districts in Bangkok. Abhisit Vejjajiva declared a state of emergency for Bangkok and surrounding areas on April 7, 2010. Subsequently, there were gun shots and bombings frequently outside the protest areas, killing and injuring both innocent people and armed forces. During the final crackdown from May 13 to May 19, 2010, the UDD turned violent with clashes between protesters and security forces in Bangkok, leading to the deaths of both civilians and security troops.

This series of continuing turbulent and violent events had a prolonged effect on the Thai politics and economy. In terms of political aspect, after the coup in September 2006, Thailand has changed five Prime Ministers

from two different political cliques within six years (Exhibit 15). The incident also influenced Thailand's credibility among foreign investors and the Thai tourism industry. Unfortunately, the turmoil is still ongoing and the end is nowhere in sight.

The 2009 Influenza or the swine flu

The negative impact on the Thai tourism industry was further increased with the outbreak of the 2009 influenza or the swine flu that began in Mexico in April 2009. It has been reported that most of the 1,811 cases and 28 deaths reported as of July 21, 2009 occurred in and around Bangkok. As a result, swine flu made people around the world leery of travel and visiting other places, especially those in the affected areas.

The Prime Minister's Decisions are Crucial, Especially in Times of Political Conflict

More than half of the country was impacted by the 2011 flood. The Prime Minister also knows that sooner or later, another massive flood will reach Bangkok. The performance of the National Command Center has been criticized by opposition party, mass media, foreign investors, and, of course, the people of the country. Everything the Center has done seems to be ineffective and what have been communicated seems misleading. Few appear to trust in what the government has said or done. People chose to follow scholars and the mass media, hoping that these people can provide them with the more reliable and direct information they need. Under these circumstances, the Prime Minister has to do something to effectively handle the crisis. All of the actions taken need to be done promptly and correctly in crisis situation.

The fact is that the Prime Minister and those in a close relationship with the Prime Minister are also victims of the flood crisis. The Prime Minister's house in Northern Thailand was covered by 1.5 meter high water. More than half of the governmental office and its equipment were under water. There was insufficient availability of boats, food, medicine, water and important equipment. Some equipment could not be operated when necessary. Electricity and communication channels were shut down. It is clear that even the government is severely suffered by the crisis. Most importantly, the government has no experience in handling such a great crisis and people in the country were in a panic and hatred towards the government seemed

to be increasing as the government could not manage the flood crisis as expected.

Among these challenges, the Prime Minister has to find the most effective solution to mitigate the damage to the country as fast as possible, because there was little time available as the flood had already engulfed most parts of the country and there was a great deal of damage needed to be repaired. Not only the necessity to rescue and evacuate those affected by the flood, and effective urban flood management, it also includes mitigating the damage to the country (and the government)'s reputation as a reliable manufacturing base among all stakeholders. According to the experience during these several months, the Prime Minister recognizes that communication is an important tool to make all of these happens. However, apart from the aforementioned conflicts, there are several other limitations, especially in terms of time, manpower and resources that have not been well planned or prepared. Also, neither appropriate allocation of roles nor coordination between related organizations has been articulated. Under these circumstances and limitations, the Prime Minister has to precisely determine the best way to act and response promptly for the country's sake.

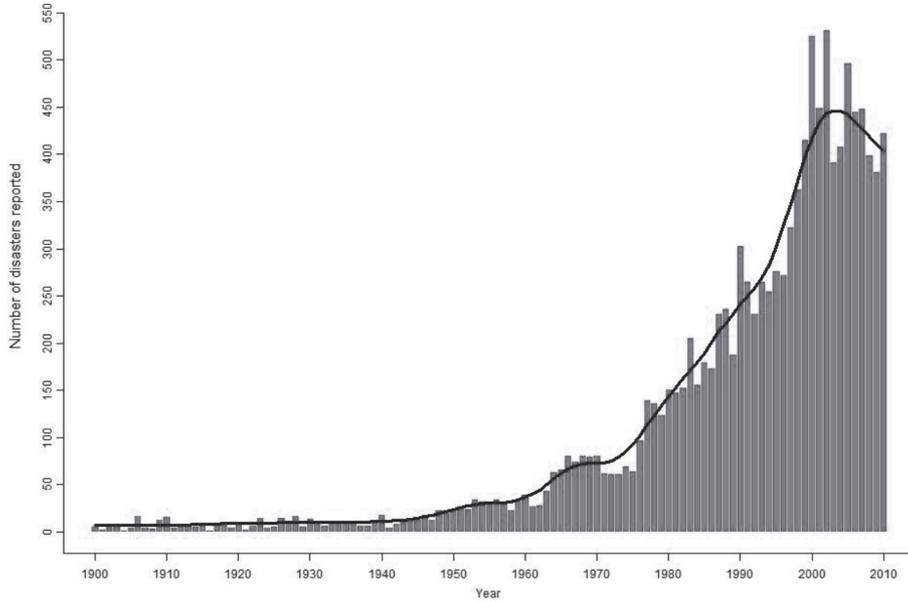
At this point, as shown in the schematic below, there are two fundamental actions that the Prime Minister can choose: one is to spend time and energy in making an emergency crisis communication plan, which still does not exist, in order to handle the situation and regain people's trust systematically; or secondly, since there is little time in such an emergency, focusing on flood protection and relief activities and finding a situational solution for each circumstance without creating any communication plan would be better, faster and easier.

Choice A: Although it seems to be too late to make a crisis communication plan while crisis is already happening to the country, spending more time and energy in creating an emergency crisis communication plan will lead to one of the best strategies in managing the country's crisis.

Choice B: During the time of crisis, it is imperative that the most urgent issue be prioritized and implemented. Since overwhelmingly large numbers of people are suffering from the severe damage caused by floods, focusing on flood protection and relief activities without wasting time in creating a crisis communication plan would be the best decision to make. For this is the fastest way to bring back the country's well-being. That is, set aside the planning of communication strategy a future endeavor after the flood has been relieved.

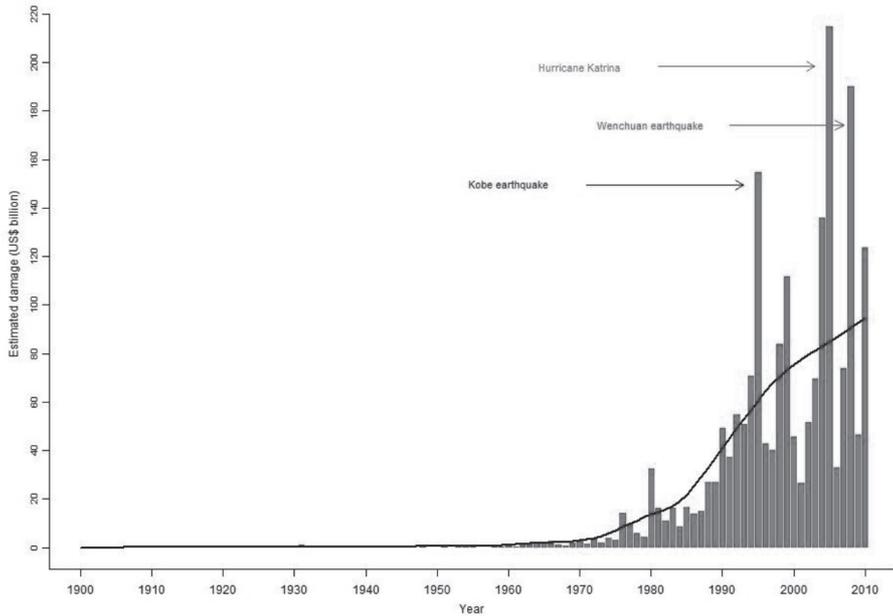
After considering all information and statistics in hand, the Prime Minister finally made the decision to cope with this crisis proactively. The leader of the country, then, gathered colleagues and meet to attempt to resolve the crisis.

Exhibit 1: Number of Disasters Reported 1900-2010



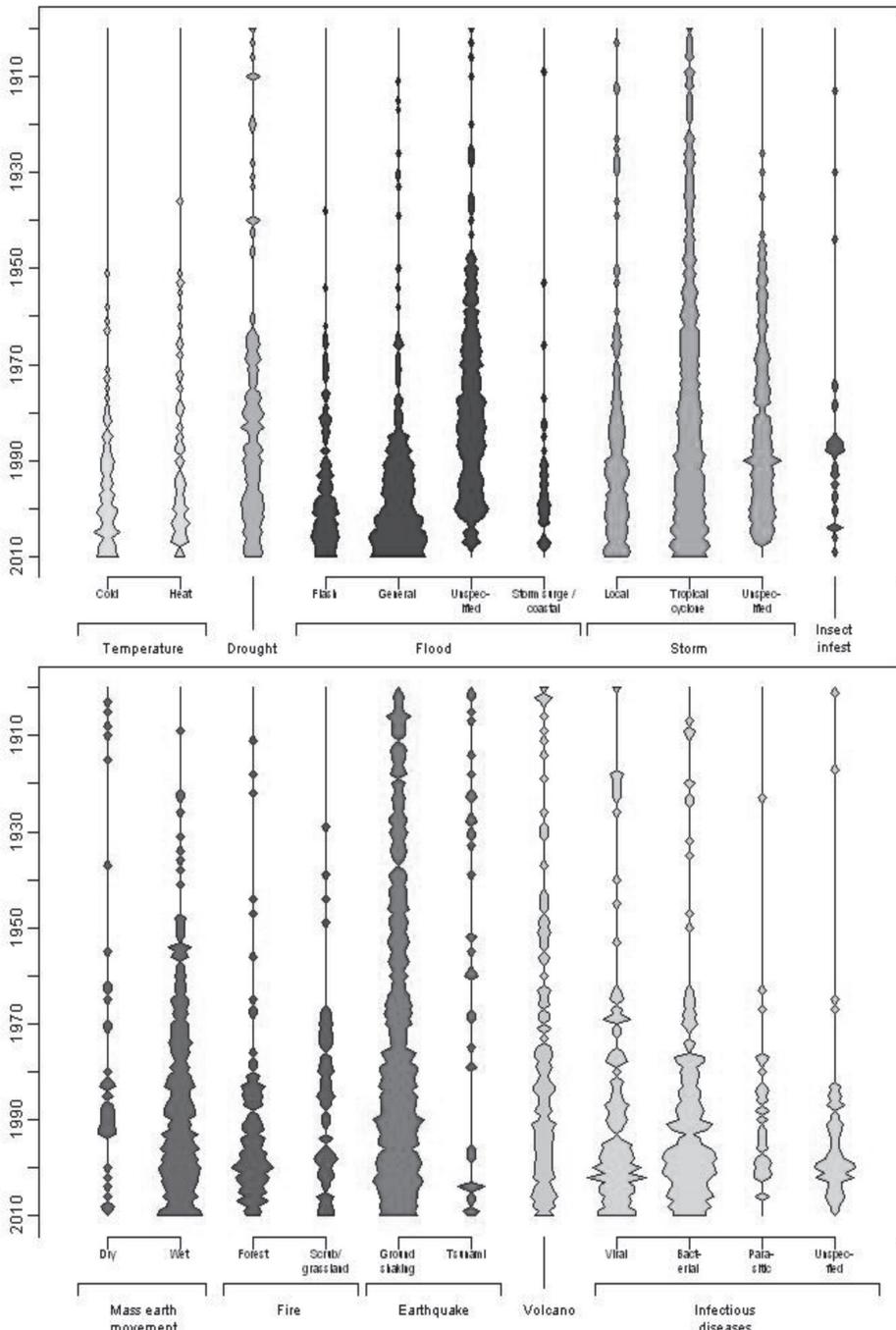
Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

Exhibit 2: Estimated Damages (US\$ billion) Caused by Reported Natural Disasters 1900-2010



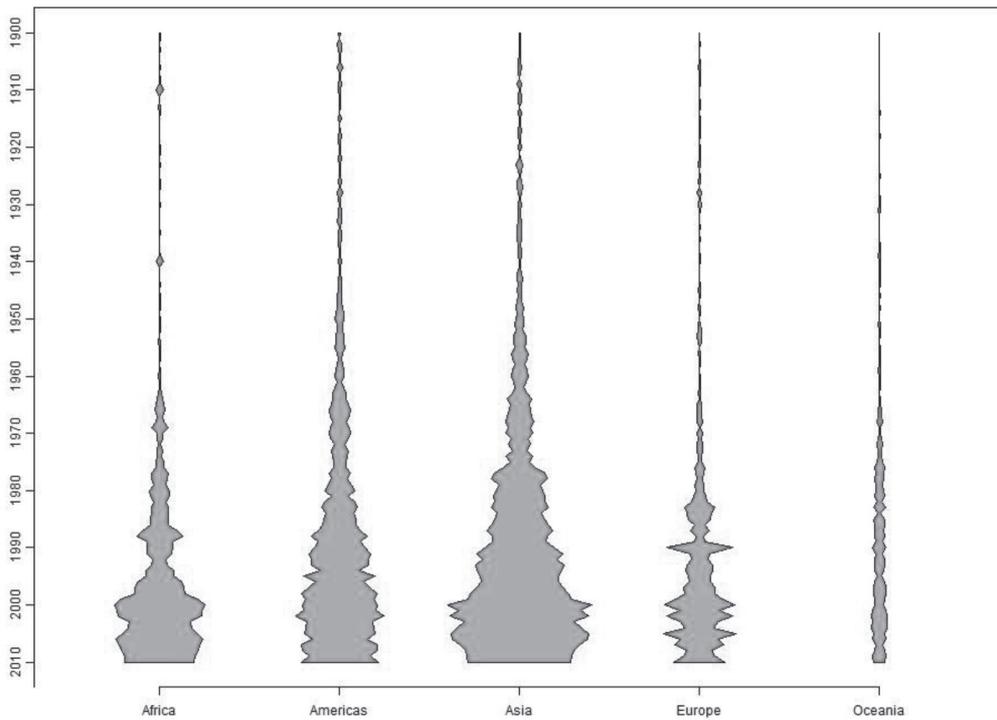
Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

Exhibit 3: Number of Natural Disaster Types Reported 1900-2010 (Square Rooted)



Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

Exhibit 4: Number of Natural Disasters Reported 1900-2010 Separated by Continent



Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

Exhibit 5: Important Terms Related to Disaster Management

Term	Meaning
Hazards	damaging physical events, phenomena or human activities which cause any or all of the following: the loss of life, injury, physical damage, environmental degradation, and social and economic disruption which include both <i>natural hazards</i> such as floods, landslides, cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanoes and <i>man-made hazards</i> such as inappropriate policies, accidents war and conflict. These two classes of hazard are not mutually exclusive and often interact with each other. It can be seen that the root of many disasters lies in a number of hazards which can come together to have a compound effect.
Disaster	a result of a hazard that occurred and has impact on a community, overwhelming its capacity to cope. Disasters affect people, their livelihoods and their environment. The magnitude of impact is directly related to the intensity and scale of a hazard and the vulnerability of individuals and communities.
Livelihood Security	the adequate and sustainable access to and control over resources, both material and social, to enable households to achieve their rights without undermining the natural resources base. Livelihoods are only sustainable when they can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks.
Vulnerability	A set of conditions and processes resulting from physical, social, economical and environmental factors, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards.
Crisis	An anomalous event that may negatively affect an organization and requires efficient organizational communication to reduce the damage related to the event. Crisis can be natural disaster, management misconduct, product tampering, rumor, technical breakdown, accident, etc.

Exhibit 6: Top 10 Natural Disasters in Thailand for the Period 1900 to 2012 by Total Numbers People Affected (Created on June 7, 2012)

Disaster	Date	No.Total Affected
Drought	April 2008	10,000,000
Flood	August 5, 2011	9,500,000
Flood	October 10, 2010	8,970,653
Drought	March 2010	6,482,602
Drought	January 1999	6,000,000
Flood	June 30, 1996	5,000,000
Drought	February 2002	5,000,000
Flood	August 1, 1995	4,280,984
Flood	October 2002	3,289,420
Flood	January 3, 1975	3,000,093

Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

Exhibit 7: Flood Statistics 2002-2010 (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2011)

Year	Frequency	No. of Province Affected	Damage		
			Injuries (person)	Fatalities (person)	Value of Damage (million Baht)
2002	5	72	0	216	13,385.31
2003	17	66	10	44	2,050.26
2004	12	59	3	28	850.65
2005	12	63	0	75	5,982.28
2006	6	58	1,462	446	9,627.41
2007	13	54	17	36	1,687.86
2008	6	65	16	113	7,601.79
2009	5	64	22	53	5,252.61
2010	7	74	1,665	266	16,338.72

Exhibit 8: Storm Statistics 2002-2010 (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2011)

Year	Frequency	No. of Province Affected	Damage		
			Injuries (person)	Fatalities (person)	Value of Damage (million Baht)
2002	594	67	11	18	213.33
2003	3,213	76	434	74	457.42
2004	3,834	76	63	73	398.41
2005	1,313	57	0	13	148.87
2006	1,883	65	39	29	92.24
2007	2,233	67	71	10	234.54
2008	1,995	65	30	15	227.54
2009	1,348	68	26	24	207.37
2010	2,192	69	174	30	198.84

Exhibit 9: Drought Statistics 2002-2010 (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2011)

Year	No. of Province Affected	Damage		
		No. of People Affected (Household)	No. of Agri. Area Affected (Rai ¹³)	Value of Damage (Million Baht)
2002	66	12,841,110	2,071,560	508.78
2003	63	5,939,282	484,189	174.32
2004	64	8,388,728	1,480,209	190.66
2005	71	11,147,627	13,736,660	7565.86
2006	61	11,862,358	578,753	495.27
2007	66	16,754,980	1,350,118	198.30
2008	61	13,298,895	524,999	103.90
2009	62	17,353,358	594,434	108.34
2010	64	15,740,824	1,716,853	1415.22

Exhibit 10: Four Levels of Command System Separated by a Severity of Disaster (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010)

Level	Scale of Severity	Person in Charged
1	Small Scale Disaster	Local director, district director and/or Bangkok Metropolitan Director Assistant
2	Medium Scale Disaster	Provincial director and/or Bangkok Metropolitan Director
3	Large Scale Disaster¹⁴	Central Director (Director General of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation) and/or National Commander (Minister of Ministry of Interior)
4	Very Large Scale Disaster¹⁵	Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister whom assigned by the Prime Minister

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Government	Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior	Act as the State nodal agency to carry out disaster management activities of the country (according to Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Act 2007). Principle responsibilities are: To take steps to organize operational research in order to acquire the measures for the efficient disaster management, to create risk area, safety area and disaster statistics databases, to take action in dealing with disaster, to provide relief assistance to people affected by disaster, etc.
	Office of the Prime Minister	To provide the budget for conducting disaster management activities, to provide relief assistance to affected people according to the policy of the government.
	Public Relations Department, Office of the Prime Minister	To launch the relevant public relations campaign to facilitate the mobilization of the public participation in disaster management, to publicize and tactfully manage the emergency situation related information to intercept the panic, to prepare the joint information center beforehand to function as the public relations coordination center in times of need, to take steps for publication of news and information on disaster relief and stricken area rehabilitation operations to keep the general public well informed of the government agency performance, etc.
	Royal Thai Police ¹⁶	To maintain peace, order and security of the general public, to contribute to the efficiency and timeliness of disaster operations, to assess the situation and exchange the information with the operations unit of other relevant agencies as well as disseminating warning information to the general public, to conduct dead human body identification and repatriation, to establish field operations center until the situation return to normalcy.

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010) (continued)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Government	Ministry of Defence	To coordinate with DDPM to identify the measures regarding disaster operations which have an effect on military personnel, to educate and train the government official, volunteer and general public on both technical aspect and practice regarding military operations of specific incidents, to coordinate and support disaster operations in various areas, to provide assistance to affected people.
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	To coordinate and contact with foreign missions, to contact and coordinate to request for disaster assistance and support from foreign governments and international organizations, to support and coordinate with DDPM in requesting for assistance and support from ASEAN member countries.
	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	To enhance social development and social welfare networks to function as supportive disaster prevention mechanisms at grass root level, to contribute and transport the subsistence supplies to the affected area and provide appropriate care for the affected orphans, disabled and the elders.
	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives	To assess the agricultural disaster situation and to take the required steps for the development of water resources to prevent and mitigate the flood and drought, to develop flood forecasting system and keep the close watch on the situation for timely warning, to improve the affected agricultural area for the recovery and restoration of the affected farmers' livelihood, etc.
	Ministry of Transport	To arrange for the vehicles and drivers to support disaster operations, to take necessary steps to ensure the improvement and maintenance of road transportation network, to improve waterway to prevent flood, drought and other marine transport accidents, to arrange temporary transportation

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010) (continued)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Government		channel, to support the evacuation operations of affected people, etc.
	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	To assess threatening factors regarding natural resources and environment through the analysis of the relevant data on weather condition, amount of rainfall, water situation, land use including area at risk and the past stricken areas, to coordinate with other agencies, to take necessary steps to rehabilitate and restore affected locations of natural resources, to monitor and evaluate disaster impacts on environment, etc.
	Ministry of Information and Communication Technology	To take the steps required to prepare the main, auxiliary and standby communication and telecommunication systems to ensure their full time serviceability, to provide communication apparatus, ensure the allocation of frequency for the standby communication system in emergency situation, and prepare to dispatch the additional personnel to provide full time communication service during disaster to facilitate the acceleration of disaster relief operations both at the center and in the field.
	Ministry of Energy	To check, prepare and procure fuel, gas and energy supply for the useful purpose of disaster operations.
	Ministry of Commerce	To take necessary steps to ensure sufficient supply of subsistence basic necessities, to operate a special rationing system and keep the price of commodities under control in the wake of shortage.
	Ministry of Interior	To give directives and coordinate with provincial government and local administration organizations to carry out disaster operations within the respective jurisdiction, including in the jurisdiction nearby upon the request, to take the steps required to issue and declare disaster declaration, direct and coordinate disaster operations, provide relief and assistance

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010) (continued)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Government		to affected people and rehabilitate the affected areas due to large scale disaster with widespread catastrophic impacts, to promote and maintain internal security.
	Ministry of Justice	To develop standardize the forensic sciences practice, and prepare the list of forensic science personnel of all agencies, to keep close contact with other agencies regarding the missing person issues.
	Ministry of Labor	To prepare and seek for the technical employees for the interest of disaster operations, to arrange the appropriate educational program to enhance the capacity to safeguard the labor's own workplaces and to maintain safety, to inspect, prepare and seek for disaster related equipments and implements through demanding, procuring or leasing for the use of disaster management, to arrange the vocational training and seek the employment for affected people, etc.
	Ministry of Culture	To assist, restore and repair the damaged temples or the religious places, archeological sites and objects to resume the normal function and condition as necessary.
	Ministry of Sciences and Technology	To develop its own preparedness plan and keep ready to support local authorities to handle chemical substance and hazardous material related incident, including the prevention and containment of radioactive hazard, to arrange the study and research on sciences and technology related to disaster management, to provide full support of various technical issues including the research and development of space technology for the interest of disaster prevention and mitigation efforts, etc.

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010) (continued)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Government	Ministry of Education	To develop the educational curricula of all levels to include disaster related subjects, to support vocational training courses for the affected households.
	Ministry of Public Health	To prepare and procure medical and public health resources, to create medical and public health specialist database, to develop communication systems to ensure their efficiency in coordinating with other agencies, to keep close watch and control the outbreak of epidemic and arrange for the provision of medical and health care, to rehabilitate and keep mental spirit of the affected people.
	Emergency Medical Institute of Thailand	To take necessary steps to request the support from both public and private emergency medical service organizations, to coordinate for the mobilization of marine and air operation teams, to coordinate for the mobilization of the advanced, basic and primary emergency medical service teams, etc.
	Ministry of Industry	To control/sustain the prevention system and to supply data and deploy the experts to handle the chemical substance and hazardous material incidents.
	Metropolitan/ Provincial Waterworks Authorities	Direct and supervise the maintenance, modification, reparation and rehabilitation of disrupted water supply system as well as provision of alternative sources and facilities to keep the existing service operational and return to normalcy as soon as possible.
	Metropolitan/ Provincial Electricity Authorities	To take necessary steps to control and prevent the danger triggered by the electricity during disaster, to maintain, modify, fix and provide the alternative sources and facilities of illuminating utility.

Exhibit 11: Duties and Responsibilities of Related Agencies in Disaster Management (National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee, 2010) (continued)

Sector	Agencies	Duties and Responsibility
Private Sector/Foundation	Thai Red Cross Society	Complement government efforts in the overall disaster preparedness and relief programs such as to prepare and secure blood, medical supplies to affected people, to arrange the training course on disaster preparedness, first aid practice and public health, to ensure the arrangement of assistance to affected people during and after disaster stages, to contact and coordinate for the cooperation with foreign Red Cross Societies.
	Rajaprajanugroh Foundation Under Royal Patronage	To provide the volunteers to support disaster operations, to support the relief operations through the provision of basic necessities and other household materials and implements required for sustaining the livelihood to affected people.
	Central Civil Defence Volunteers Center	To Arrange the training courses for civil defence volunteers to ensure their standard and efficient involvement in disaster management, to coordinate with different categories of volunteer to support the commander at all levels.
	Other	To support Emergency Operations Center of all levels and to join operations as Emergency Operations Center Commander has assigned according to each agency's capacity and resources.

Note: Table by the author.

Exhibit 12: 2011 Monthly Flooded Areas (Komori, D. et al., 2012)

Month	Area (Sq. Km.)	Area (Rai)
January	189,607,196.54	118,504.50
February	-	-
March	1,963,221,266.48	1,227,013.29
April	22,925,700,697.00	14,328,562.94
May	122,616,438.84	76,635.27
June	739,073,358.93	461,920.85
July	1,415,716,433.11	884,822.77
August	9,100,495,393.35	5,687,809.62
September	24,604,894,396.54	15,378,059.00
October	29,591,106,876.98	18,494,441.77
Total	90,652,432,057.77	56,657,770.01

Exhibit 13: Monthly Dam Reservoir and Flooding Situation in the Chao Phraya River in 2011 (Komori, D. et al., 2012)

Month	Situation
March	Precipitation began at the end of March. It was 2 months earlier than a typical year.
April	Low rainfall rate continued, in line with a normal year.
May	Monthly rainfall was recorded at a very high level relative to the past 30 years (Figure 2). Water storage in the reservoirs of the two large dams (Bhumibol and Sirikit) was at a level far below the lower dam operation curve.
June	In late June, heavy rain fell due to the effects of Typhoon “HAIMA,” and water storage in both reservoirs began to recover to a large extent.
July	At the end of July, there was intense rainfall due to the effects of Typhoon “NOCK-TEN.” Monthly rainfall was the highest in the past 30 years (Figure 2). Flooding occurred at the confluence of the Yom River lower watershed and the Nan River downstream from the Sirikit Dam. Water storage in both reservoirs recovered at a steady rate.
August	There was a lot of rain in August, and water storage in reservoirs began to exceed the higher dam operation curve. However, flooding had begun in the area near Nakhon Sawan at this time, and it was no longer possible to increase preliminary release to prevent flooding downstream from both reservoirs.
September	The highest monthly rainfall in the past 30 years. The Sirikit Dam reservoir almost became full. Discharge of the Chao Phraya River exceeded its discharge capacity from Nakhon Sawan to Ayutthaya, and began to overflow. In the middle of the month, water gates on the right bank were destroyed by the flood, and massive flooding occurred. At the end of the month, levees on the left bank broke one after another, and there was flooding of around 5 billion m ³ which was estimated from the difference in the hydrograph between the upstream and downstream parts at the levee breakage location.
October	Rainfall was in line with an average year. The Bhumibol Dam reservoir almost became full. The flooding of the left bank in late September.

Note: Table by the author.

Exhibit 14: News and Occurrences Relating to the 2011 Flood

News & Occurrences	Details
Villagers battle irrigation officials (September 29)	Angry villagers in Wat Sing, Chai Nat destroy sandbag barriers flooding a nearby primary school and homes.
False alarm spurs near panic (October 14)	Residents in northern Bangkok and in the capital's inner areas were thrown into panic yesterday after Science and Technology Minister Plodprasop Suraswadi issued a flood evacuation alert which turned out to be a false alarm.
Japanese firms urge improvement Faulty information a serious concern (October 14)	While foreign direct investment remains intact, Japan's Toshiba says it is critical for the government to provide more accurate flood information and implement long-term prevention measures.
Bottled water shortages as production slows to a drip (October 14)	Major drinking water manufacturers have temporarily stopped production as their factories are crippled by the severe floods in Nakhon Sawan, Ayutthaya and Pathum Thani. This has led to a shortage of bottled water in Bangkok and some retail chains have already put a limit on the amounts consumers can buy to prevent hoarding.
Navanakorn loses fight against flood? No (updated) (October 18)	After a frantic fight to reinforce them, the embankments surrounding the Navanakorn Industrial Park in Pathum Thani's Khlong Luang district leaked and broke, flooding one of Thailand's most important properties.
Economic cost of flooding (October 18)	1.7% fall in growth, flood prevention investments financed with overseas borrowing, longer debt repayment periods for flood hit companies.
Tensions between Bangkok Governor and central gov't spill into public domain (October 21)	the federal government and local government has clashed over managing flood relief operations throughout Bangkok.

**Exhibit 14: News and Occurrences Relating to the 2011 Flood
(continued)**

News & Occurrences	Details
All-knowing Twitter for flood info (November 1)	Thai people joining Twitter in large numbers to get flood info from govt, experts & keep in contact with family & friends.
Flood situation worsens as crisis becomes political (November 6)	Flood waters continue to move deeper into Bangkok as the city and national governments just can't seem to fully cooperate with each other.
Bangkok governor gets his pumps; flooding widens (November 11)	Relations between the BMA and the national government have improved after the governor's requests for more pumps and better drainage were granted. Meanwhile, the flood situation has worsened.
Residents angry over "big bag" barrier (November 13)	The big bag (sandbag) barrier in northern Bangkok has been credited with saving the inner city from flooding, but it has left residents in the outer city under water, prompting protests.
Sorayuth & the Great Bangkok Flood (November 18)	Since the flood last year, and more so with the scale of the disaster this year, Mr Sorayuth and Channel 3 have taken even a more aggressive role not only in reporting, interviewing and commenting on the news, but also in flood relief operations. Channel 3 has become the leading news organisation in relief work: receiving donations, putting together survival bags to be handed out to flood victims, searching for and rescuing stranded people and their pets, all under the non-stop rolling of the cameras churning out moving pictures as if everybody were part of a reality TV show.

Sources: Bangkok Post.

Exhibit 15: Replacement of Thailand's Prime Minister Due to Political Turmoil since 2006 (Wikipedia, 2012)

Order	Period	Name
56	October 1, 2006- January 29, 2008	General (ret.) Surayud Chulanont
57	January 29, 2008-September 9, 2008	Samak Sundaravej
58	September 18, 2008-December 2, 2008	Somchai Wongsawat
59	December 17, 2008-August 5, 2011	Abhisit Vejjajiva
60	August 5, 2011-present	Yingluck Shinawatra

Note: Table by the author.

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Endnotes

- ¹ The red shirts, formally known as the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), are supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (who was ousted by a military coup in September 2006) and his policies and include a large proportion of working-class and rural-based Thais. Members are mainly rural workers from outside Bangkok, mostly in the north and north-east of Thailand. The red shirt ranks also include students, left-wing activists and some business people who view attempts by the urban and military elite to control Thai politics as a threat to democracy. On the other hand, the yellow shirts, a loose grouping of royalists, ultra-nationalists and the urban middle class also known as the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), utterly opposed Mr. Thaksin and his allies. The yellow shirts have a power base which is southern-based. Significantly, the yellow shirts also have many influential backers amongst Bangkok's elite.
- ² This information is derived from "National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan (2010-2014)", Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Policy Bureau, Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Interior.
- ³ This part is derived from Thailand's Country Report on Disaster Response Management, 3rd AIPA CAUCUS Report, 2011.
- ⁴ This information is derived from National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan (2010-2014), Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Policy Bureau, DDPM, Ministry of Interior.
- ⁵ This part is derived from: Review of Policies and Institutional Capacity for Early Warning and Disaster Management in Thailand, USAID, January 2007, <http://apps.develebridge.net/usiotws/b/Thailand%20Policy%20and%20Institutional%20Capacity%20Review.pdf>.
- ⁶ DDPM has implement a community-based volunteer training program which aims at creating a disaster warning network in the flash flood and mud slide prone villages. The trained villagers are designated as "Mr. Warning" and assigned to be the "vigilant", "forewarned" and "coordinator" in emergency and non-emergency situations respectively.
- ⁷ At the provincial and district level, implemented a training the trainers of provincial search and rescue (SAR) teams; while it is expected there will be tambon (Thailand's administrative unit between district and village) SAR teams nationwide.
- ⁸ This subsection is retrieved from Nareenoot Damrongchai. "A Communication of the Flood Relief Operations Center (FROC) during a great flood crisis in 2011", *Governance and Competitiveness: Challenges for Thailand*, National Institute of Development Administration, 2012. (Thai language) and related news from several newspapers.
- ⁹ This subsection is derived from: Wattanakuljarus, Anan. "Thailand's Tourism Crises: Challenges for ALL", NIDA Case Research Journal, November, 2010.
- ¹⁰ A Thai businessman and politician, who was Prime Minister of Thailand from 2001 until 2006, when he was overthrown in a military coup in September 2006.
- ¹¹ Thailand's oldest party. The party upholds a conservative liberal and pro-market position.
- ¹² Thailand's the 27th Prime Minister (from 2008 to 2011). He is the current leader of the Democrat Party. As leader of the second largest party in the House of Representatives, he is also Leader of the Opposition - a position he last held in December 2008.
- ¹³ Rai is a unit of area, equal to 1,600 square meters (40 m × 40 m), used for measuring land area. Its current size is precisely derived from the meter, but is neither part of nor recognized by the modern metric system, or a so-called the International System (SI).
- ¹⁴ Disaster with severe and widespread impact or required specialist or special equipment.
- ¹⁵ Disaster with widespread catastrophic impact.
- ¹⁶ This agency is the juristic person subordinated to the Prime Minister of Thailand.