

Mr. Arun Pinta, Thailand

My name is Arun Pinta and I am from Thailand. I work for the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) which is the Thai national disaster management organization. My major responsibility at the DDPM is to coordinate ASEAN regional programs and activities under the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management. In addition, I am a member of the DDPM's Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Trainers team, which is tasked with creating awareness and increasing the capacities of disaster-prone communities nationwide. Prior to my arrival in Japan, I had many chances to work with the ADRC staff members in Thailand. These included my interactions with a damage assessment mission immediately after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and my involvement in the "Education for Disaster Preparedness in Primary School" project in 2006.



Let me tell you a little bit about my country. Thailand is located in Southeast Asia and is a core member of ASEAN. The climate in Thailand is tropical and shaped by monsoons. There is a rainy, warm, and cloudy southwest monsoon from mid-May to September, as well as a dry, cool northeast monsoon from November to mid-March. In terms of disaster risk, Thailand shares some similarities with other disaster-prone countries in that we are hit repeatedly by both natural and technological disasters. The most destructive disaster in recent history was the Indian Ocean Tsunami, which claimed 8,400 lives in the southern provinces. Although this tsunami resulted in the greatest number of fatalities ever attributed to a single disaster, floods and droughts are more common events. These water-related disasters have caused extensive and repeated damage to Thailand's economic and social development.

Disaster management in Thailand was launched in 1934 when a department responsible for air defense was established under the Ministry of Defense. Disaster management today is based primarily on the Civil Defense Act, which was enacted on 22 March 1979. This act gave birth to the National Civil Defense Committee (NCDC) which plays an important role in navigating Thailand's disaster management activities. Under this act, the DDPM serves as the secretariat of the NCDC and as the coordinating body for all disaster-related government agencies, the private sector, experts, and volunteers.

Despite a long history of disaster management, it was not until October 2002, when the DDPM was established, that Thailand started to approach disaster management as a high priority issue. This shift is attributed to the increase in the magnitude and complexity of the disasters that we have been facing. The 2004 tsunami also provided considerable momentum to efforts to review and improve the existing disaster management system so as to reduce and mitigate the impact of disasters. Thailand is on its way to becoming safer from disaster threats than ever before.

During my six months at the ADRC, my research has focused on two main topics: (1) Thailand's past disasters and (2) a comparative study of earthquake disaster management at the provincial/prefectural levels in Thailand and Japan. I would like also to learn about disaster management in other ADRC member countries. I hope that my research and work at the ADRC as a visiting researcher will contribute to the transfer of knowledge, best practices and insights from Japan and other member countries to Thailand for future applications. I also hope that this position will give me an opportunity to contribute Thailand's knowledge and experience to regional disaster reduction efforts.