

Disaster Law

Legal Preparedness for International Disaster Response (IDRL) in Thailand

In November 2014, the Thai Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) partnered with the Thai Ministry of Interior's Department for Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) to host a workshop on 'legal preparedness for international disaster response in Thailand'. This workshop brought together over sixty representatives from Thai government ministries, the Armed Forces, Thai Red Cross, the United Nations, academia and civil society organizations to discuss how to improve Thailand's legal frameworks for disaster management and response, in line with international disaster response laws, rules and principles (IDRL).



"We live in a region that is constantly facing large and small scale natural disasters", stated Mr. Tej Bunnag, Assistant Secretary General of Thai Red Cross, at the opening of the IDRL workshop. "This reinforces the importance for local, national and international partners to work together to increase our preparedness. Despite the growing capacity of states in the region to prepare for and respond to disasters, international assistance can still be required".

Sentiments like this were echoed by government representatives. "Large scale disasters like the 2004 tsunami are quite rare for Thailand...[and] in the past there has not been much pressure to develop legal frameworks for IDRL. But that doesn't mean we don't need to be legally prepared", explained Mr. Arun Pinta, Chief of Foreign Relations at DDPM.

The workshop also presented an opportunity to discuss the role of international disaster assistance in the context of middle income countries (MICs), and recognize the growing capacity in Southeast Asia to prepare for and respond to disasters.

Key recommendations identified during the workshop included the need to conduct a mapping of the existing laws, rules and procedures in Thailand that relate to international assistance, and identify areas for further improvement. DDPM also plans to develop a new guideline on international assistance and cooperation, utilizing the 'Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance' (the IDRL Guidelines). IFRC and Thai Red Cross will continue to work with DDPM and other key actors in Thailand to ensure that strong laws and procedures are in place to facilitate international disaster assistance – when and if required.



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