Long-Term Capacity-Building in Public Health Emergency Preparedness in Thailand – Short Report

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Abstract

Thailand’s long-term commitment to public health workforce capacity building and its health infrastructure were key components in its successful response to the December 26, 2004 tsunami disaster. Surveillance and Rapid Response Teams, comprising fellows and staff from the Field Epidemiology Training Programme of Thailand, in collaboration with staff from the Thailand Ministry of Public Health – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization, enabled a rapid and an effective public health response. Active surveillance, outbreak response and control, rapid health assessments, and mental health surveys provided critical information on the public health priorities and medical needs of the impacted populations. Environmental assessments of temporary morgues led to health safety and infection-control recommendations, and computerised surveillance systems assisted in victim tracking and identification. Thailand’s experience demonstrates the importance of a prepared public health sector in mitigating the impact of disasters, and supports the recommendation of the Fifty-Eighth World Health Assembly for Member States to develop preparedness plans that include building capacity to respond to health-related crises. Asia Pac J Public Health 2007; 19(Special Issue): 13–17.

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