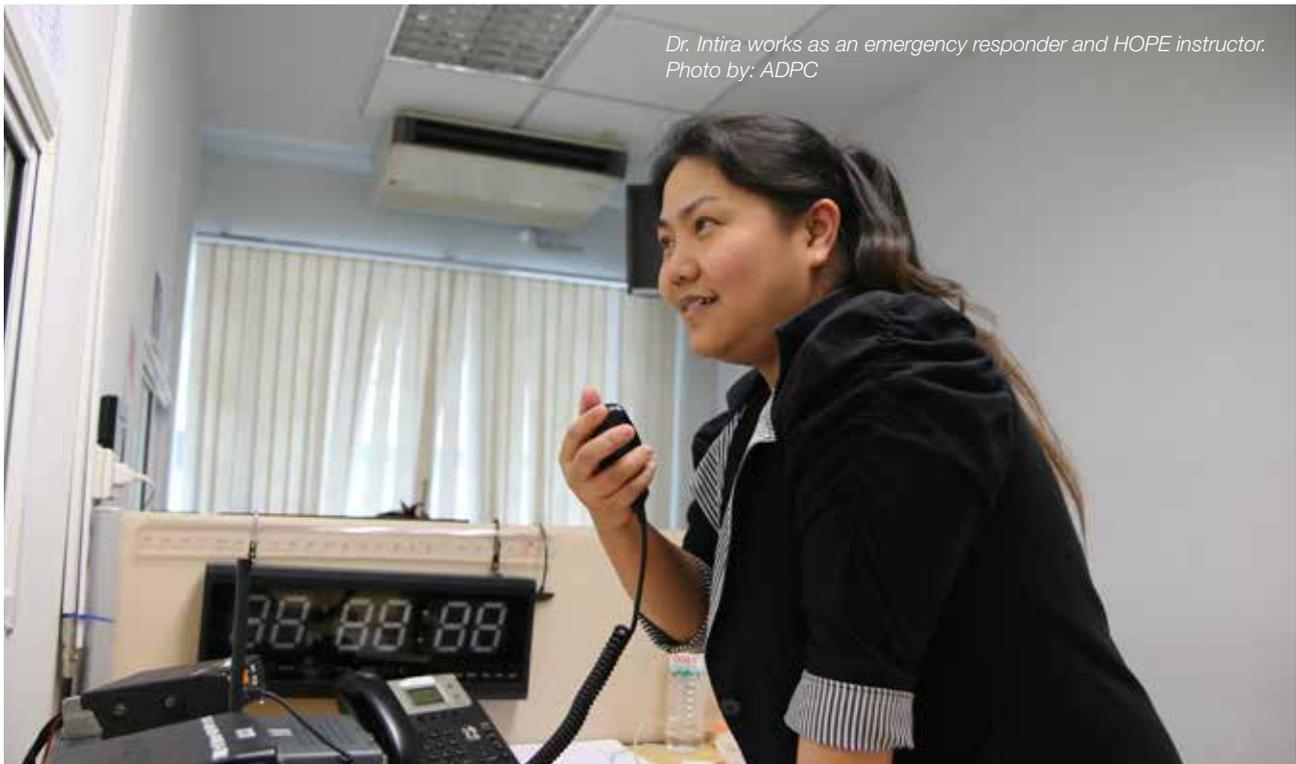


Preparing hospitals for response: doctors at the forefront



*Dr. Intira works as an emergency responder and HOPE instructor.
Photo by: ADPC*

Bangkok, Thailand — Nestled in the historic area of Bangkok, the Erawan Unit of the Medical Services, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), holds critical responsibility for emergency medical response of the bustling city. The unit works around the clock to coordinate life-saving dispatch services and management of prehospital medical services. Among the hospital workers that rotate shifts at Erawan is the unit's prized asset, Dr. Intira Outaivattananon from Sirindorn Hospital.

Dr. Intira is one of the graduates of ADPC's Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE) training course under the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER-3). The program aims to build the capacities of hospitals by developing qualified instructors, coordinators and monitors, and cooperation between institutions.

After the 2011 floods that devastated the majority of the country, hospitals in Thailand were invited by ADPC to undergo training to respond to emergency and mass casualty incidents. Dr. Intira was selected by BMA to train in the HOPE course, where she participated in model hospital and program integration activities, simulation exercises, and the training for instructors course.

"At first, I was not so interested in the HOPE program because my hospital was not affected by the floods," Dr. Intira recounted, "but as I continued training, it became exciting because all of the material was new. In my six years at medical school, I never learned anything about emergency preparedness for disasters."

From the classroom to the field

As one of the few national graduates of the HOPE program, Dr. Intira served as the medical commander during the royal funeral procession of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej in October 2017. With thousands of people gathered to pay their final respects to the King, preparing onsite medical services to provide emergency response was critical to ensure the safety of mourners.

Drawing from the HOPE program's mass gathering exercise, Dr. Intira coordinated with a HOPE graduate nurse to prepare the emergency plan for the event. Three emergency scenarios were drawn up to ensure ambulances always had uninterrupted routes to hospitals. In the event of an incident that impaired the function of medical aid stations, the command center was prepared to relocate and delegate new tasks to remaining stations. A triage color-coding system was set in place to identify priority patient groups.

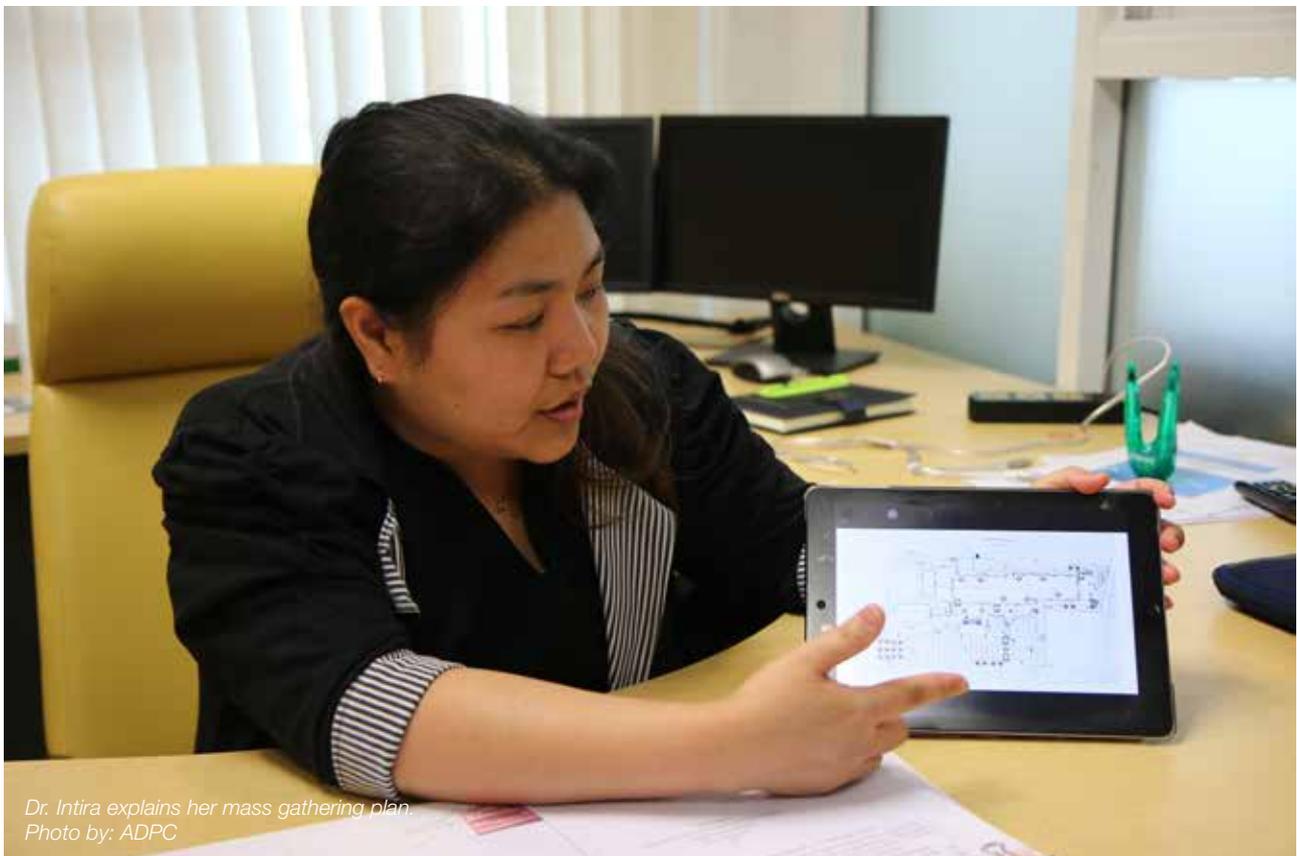
As she proudly flipped through her detailed emergency plan, Dr. Intira emphasized the role of the HOPE program. **"Before the HOPE course, I could not make this plan. I realized that medical knowledge is not enough to fully respond to a disaster- it is important to know the system and structure of emergency response," she said.**

A shift in mindset

With knowledge and real-life practice of the HOPE course under her belt, Dr. Intira laughs as she explains how her shift in mindset has made her notice various hazards that pose as risks in her surroundings. "I never felt unsafe in my own hospital before the HOPE course. Now I notice toxic materials, fire hazards, radiation sources and other risk factors," she said.

Her increased awareness of potential risks has motivated her to re-evaluate her hospital's emergency plans that she now deems inadequate. Ultimately, she hopes to implement an emergency response system at the administrative level, but admits this has been a challenge.

"As Thailand is relatively safe from threats of major hazards, the medical faculty and hospital systems can have limited experience and exposure to large-scale emergency response. New systems can be challenging to implement, and what we can do right now is to slowly influence and advocate to new doctors and nurses to make hospitals more prepared and safe," she said.



*Dr. Intira explains her mass gathering plan.
Photo by: ADPC*



The Erawan Unit coordinates life-saving dispatch services.
Photo by: ADPC

Sharing the knowledge

Dr. Intira is influencing hospitals with her tireless work to train hospital workers in a course that she believes to be very useful for emergency medical response across Thailand and the region. As a graduate of HOPE Training for Instructors (H-TFI) program, Dr. Intira is confident in teaching course material to students.

“After teaching so many HOPE courses, you not only share the knowledge with other hospital workers but also fully understand the course material for yourself. I now appreciate the importance of the course and know how to guide students to achieve the goals of the HOPE program,” she said, adding that HOPE Training for Instructors Course (H-TFI) helped develop her communication and presentation skills that are also useful for the other courses she teaches to medical students.

Responding to her colleagues’ interest in hospital preparedness for emergency, Dr. Intira prepared two days of lectures to share essential HOPE training material during her hospital’s annual emergency drill. She is now working with other HOPE graduates to implement courses across hospitals in Bangkok.

Dr. Intira is also part of an international instructor team that trains hospitals across the Asia and the Pacific region. Developing quality instructors is a key aspect of the HOPE program, as Chief of Party of HOPE South Asia from ADPC, Mr. John Abo, explains that “all HOPE graduates understand the standardized course material because the program ensures courses are taught by the same quality instructors, no matter the country.”

A seasoned HOPE instructor, Dr. Intira has trained hospital workers in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. She explains that cultural differences can be challenging to navigate, but H-TFI has taught her to assess learners’ cultures and adjust to experiences and expectations.

Dr. Intira’s story demonstrates the impact that one motivated individual can have on building capacity of hospitals, and reaffirms the importance of quality instructors to create a new generation of leaders and change-makers.

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