

COVID-19 Infodemic Management: Thailand Experience

Side event: Infodemic Management: Promoting healthy behaviors in the time of
COVID-19 and mitigating harm from misinformation and disinformation

The 75th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations
23 September 2020

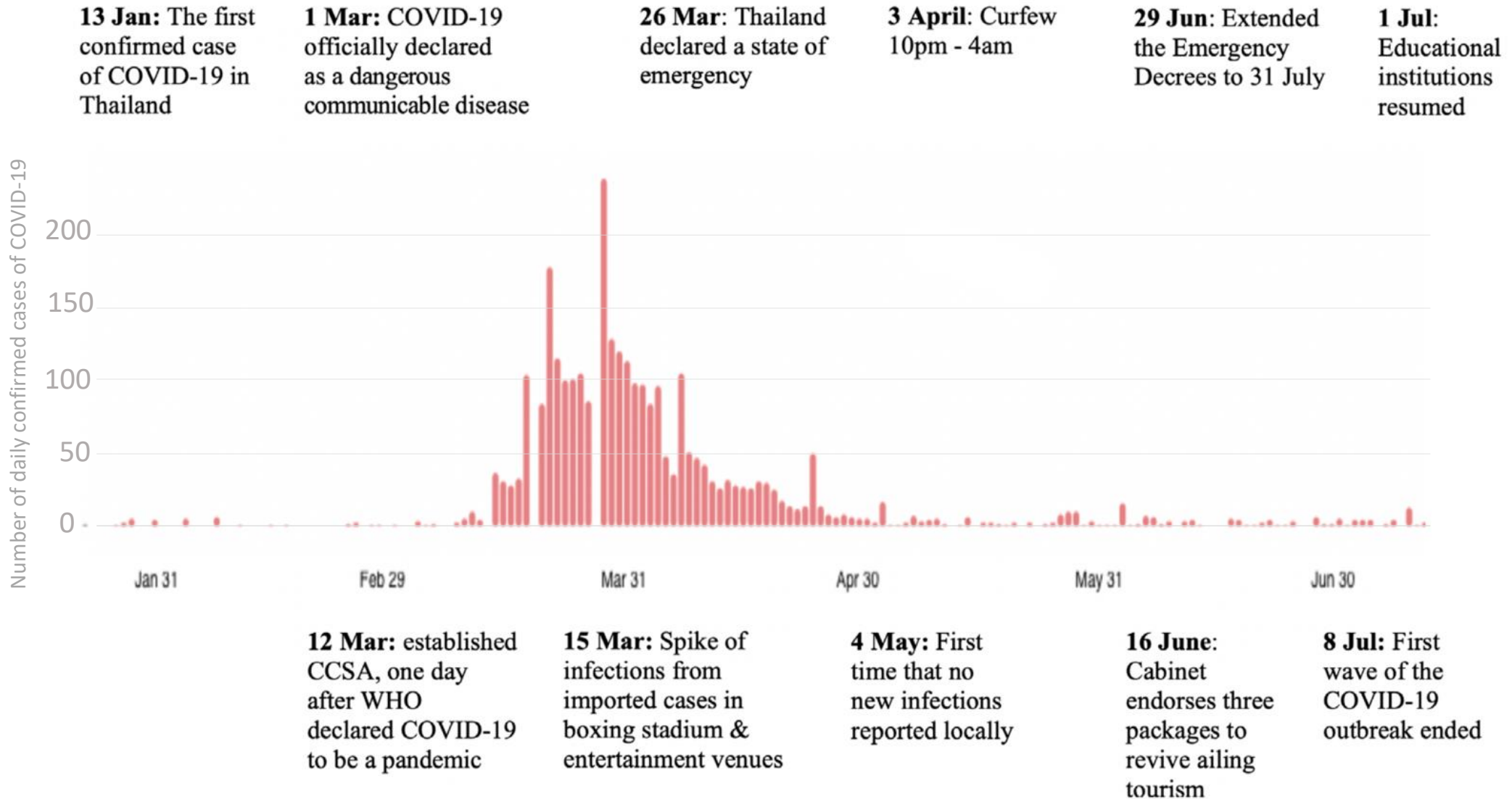
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Presentation Outline

- Overview of COVID-19 situation in Thailand
- Pandemic and infodemic in Thailand
- How did we manage?
- What did we do?
- What did we learn?
- Policy recommendations

Overview of COVID-19 situation in Thailand



Source: Sirilak, S. ed. 2020. *Thailand's Experience in the COVID-19 Response*, Bangkok, MOPH

Infodemic = Information + Pandemic



***“We’re not just fighting an epidemic;
we’re fighting an infodemic.”***

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
WHO Director-General
Munich Security Conference, 15 February 2020

Infodemic in Thailand

Examples of Fake News



Government officers open all parcel to confiscate surgical masks and resell them



Police has the power to fine for 200 THB if you go out without mask



Putting sanitary pad on masks increase its effectiveness in preventing COVID-19



Drinking hot water & eating ginger, garlic, & chili can prevent COVID-19



Surin province has over 10,000 positive cases of COVID-19

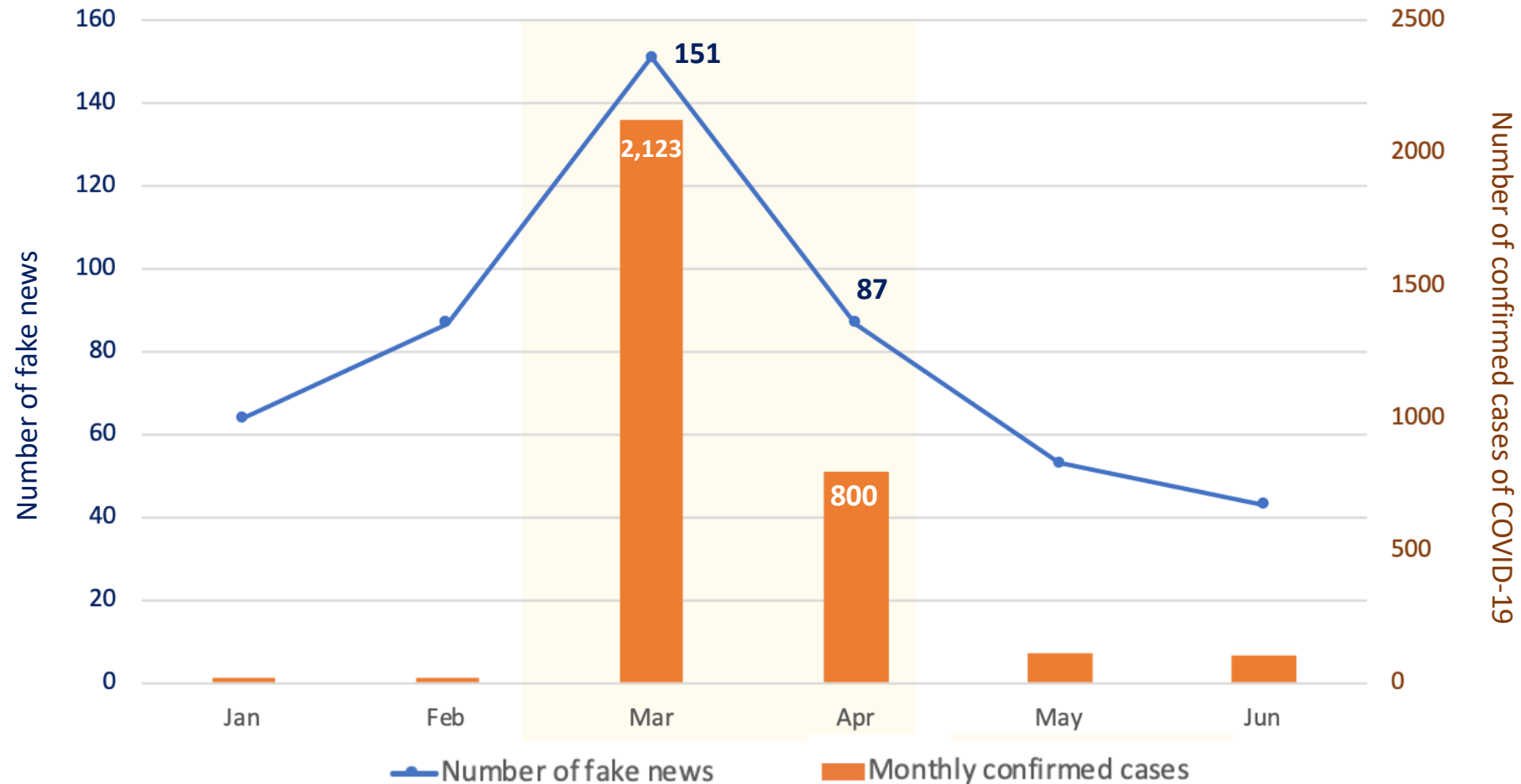


What to do to prevent COVID-19?

- Gargling with salt water
- Don't take anti-virus without prescription
- Eat garlic, tea, & herb will protect from COVID-19
- Attend immune system-enhancing course

Infodemic in Thailand

Misinformation and confirmed cases of COVID-19



Note: Number of fake news verified by the Anti-Fake News Center, under Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, Thailand (<https://www.antifakenewscenter.com>)
The number of confirmed cases extracted from <https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/th>

How did we manage?

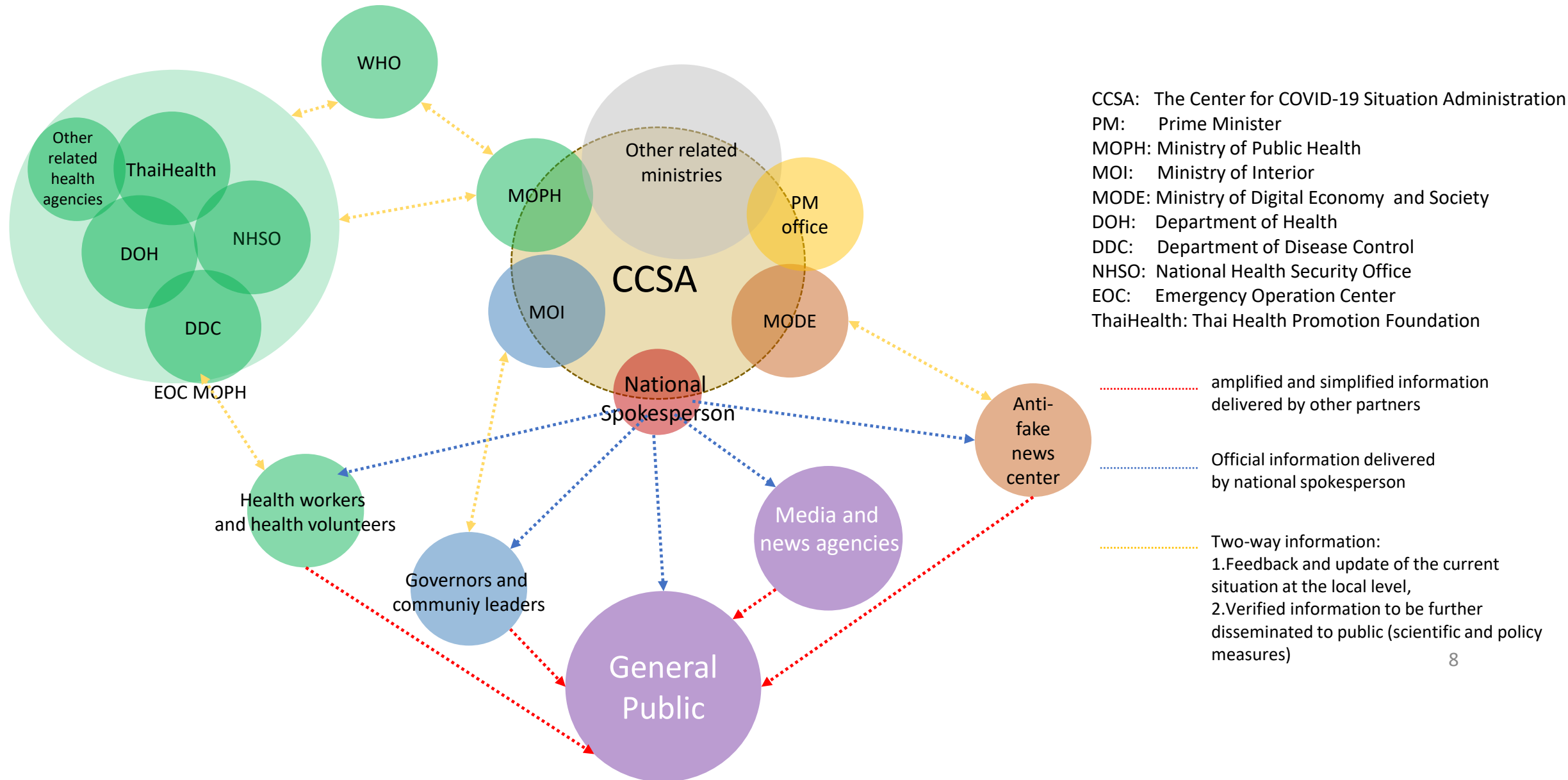
Risk communication system in managing infodemic

- **Whole-of-government** Through Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) led by the Prime Minister
- **One Voice** Live TV daily briefing as an official source of information delivered by the CCSA speaker
- **Verified Information** Transparent, evidence-based, and easy-to-understand messages, guidelines and information ensures citizens' trust and adherence
- **Multi-sectoral collaboration** Work with other actors (government and non-government) to amplify the messages and reach the broader audience



Dr Taweessilp Visanuyothin, spokesperson of the CCSA, became an icon of daily situation update televised in all media channels.

Flow of information in the risk communication system in Thailand



What did we do?

Monitoring people's behaviors and attitudes and evaluation of existing risk communication

- **A 10 weekly online survey May-July 2020:** to understand the behavior and attitude of Thai population towards misinformation and disinformation on COVID-19
- Establishing the media literacy index:
 - (1) knowledge to differentiate misinformation,
 - (2) Not-propagating/sharing false statements(4 May-25 June 2020: 52,354 respondents)
- Perceptions towards existing risk communication system (26 June-9 July 2020: 15,973 respondents)



For more information please visit: <http://trueorfalse.ihppthaigov.net>

What did we learn?

Results of the survey of people's behavior and attitude towards misinformation and disinformation related to COVID-19

- **Misinformation is everywhere:** distributed across the regions and different sociodemographic groups and can hinder the efforts to fight COVID-19
- **Official trustworthy sources of information:** particularly by health agencies are critical to build citizens' trust and adherence to social interventions
- **Managing infodemic is beyond the health sector:** a whole-of-society approach is critical to counter misinformation
- **82%** have seen misinformation and disinformation in social media.
- Media literacy index is at **69%: 54%** can differentiate false or misleading information related to COVID-19 and **87%** did not share false or misleading information to social media platforms.
- Health agencies were considered more trustworthy in disseminating correct information related to COVID-19.
- Traditional media platforms (live-tv daily briefing) is vital in providing information to the public which can be further disseminated through social media.
- The power of social media and celebrities has played a crucial role in raising awareness of the general public regarding the dangers of COVID-19 (Sirilak, 2020).
- Only limited news that can be verified from the official sources (limited capacity of the agencies, limited supporting evidences)

Policy recommendations

- **Strengthen the institutional capacity and transparency** in delivering correct information to public
 - **Strengthen the whole-of-society approach** to counter misinformation
 - **Establish a regulatory framework** to prevent the dissemination of misinformation in social media
1. Strengthen fact-checking capacity in collaboration with WHO and international partners
 2. Strengthen multi-sectoral collaborations to disseminate trustworthy information and counter misinformation
 3. Strengthen MODE's timely legal sanction of deliberate dissemination of misinformation
 4. Work with social media providers to ban and terminate accounts which disseminate misinformation
 5. Develop mechanisms and tools such as artificial intelligence which detect and ban the recycling of misinformation and false statements in social media

Thank you for your attention



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