

Country: THAILAND

Project Title: Supporting Conflict Transformation in Thailand through assessment, dialogue and coordination

Expected CP Outcome(s): National legislation, policies and justice administration comply with international human rights norms and standards.

Start Date: 17th February 2014

End Date: 31th December 2014

Implementing Partner: UNDP Thailand

Responsible Parties: UN RCO in Thailand, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University), and Coalition Center for Thai Violence Monitoring

Brief Description

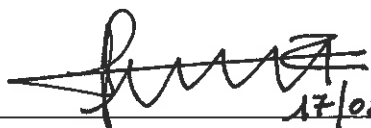
January 2014 saw the intensification of political protests and violence and a considerable deterioration in the country's security situation which raises prospects of widespread political violence in Thailand, while the scope for peaceful resolution is narrowing. Peaceful demonstrations have been targeted repeatedly in the heart of Bangkok resulting in eleven people killed and more than 510 injured since November 2013. As anti-government protesters intensify actions, the risk of violence across wide swathes of the country is growing and significant.

The project on 'Supporting Conflict Transformation in Thailand through assessment, dialogue and coordination' is a small initiative to respond to the current situation to a) help assess & monitor the current situation to inform the UN/UNDP programming and to prevent further deterioration, b) engage key stakeholders across partisan lines in a constructive dialogue around key governance reforms as a means of conflict transformation; and, c) provide a better UN coordination of information and responses to the current conflict.

Country Programme Period:	January 2012 – December 2016	Total resources required	\$ 100,000
CPD Programme Component:	Improved social equity through inclusive governance	Total allocated resources:	\$ 65,000
Atlas Project ID:	00079404	• Regular (TRAC 1.1.3)	\$ 65,000
Atlas Output ID:	00089389	• Other:	
Management Arrangement:	Direct Implementation*	Unfunded budget:	\$ 35,000
		In-kind Contributions	

*Note: The project is funded by TRAC 1.1.3 Category II (response to sudden crisis) which is automatically eligible for direct implementation (DIM).

Agreed by UNDP:



17/02/2014

Luc Stevens

UN Resident Coordinator

UNDP Resident Representative

BACKGROUND

With the support of BCPR/DPA the UNCT/UNDP in Thailand have been exploring Thailand's political landscape and conflict dimension over the past two years, providing a solid analytical background to understand the current crisis and identify opportunities to mitigate the conflict. As noted in the recent conflict analysis paper conducted for the UNCT: "Thailand has become a very different country since the early 1960s. Electoral politics have amplified the divisions between different regions, while socio-economic change has broken down the urban-rural distinctions that Thais have long used to imagine their own identities. Frequent mass protests, especially since 2005, have illustrated the emergence of multiple collective grievances."

Towards the end of last year anti-government street protests intensified in Bangkok once more after Thailand's lower house passed a controversial amnesty bill on October 31, which could allow former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to return and his corruption charges dropped (the bill was eventually turned down in the Senate under the pressure of the protesters). The PDRC (People's Democratic Reform Committee – set up by the protesters' leadership), whose stated aim is to oust the "Thaksin regime" (starting with the PM Yingluck Shinawatra) appointing a "People's Council" to implement major political reform before returning to elections. (Following the dissolution of the parliament called by the PM on December 9, 2013 elections have been called for February 2, 2014). Thaksin-aligned parties have won every poll since 2001, a record that has eroded his enemies' faith in elections and is attributed to vote fraud and the susceptibility of poorer, less educated citizens to unethical, unsustainable populist policies.

January 2014 saw the intensification of these protests with a considerable deterioration in the security situation which raises prospects of widespread political violence, while the scope for peaceful resolution is narrowing. Peaceful demonstrations have been targeted repeatedly in the heart of Bangkok resulting in eleven people killed and more than 510 injured since November 2013. As anti-government protesters intensify actions, the risk of violence across wide swathes of the country is growing and significant. Extremist voices are loud and the risk of pro-government groups to come out and stage counter-rallies real. Drive-by shooting and explosive attacks also continued during night time in different parts of the city, including in front of the UN building, damaging glass panes of the UNCC

The government on 21 January declared that a state of emergency for 60 days in Bangkok and some surrounding areas. The decision was reportedly motivated by the escalation of violence and the continuous targeting of government offices and banks by the protesters. However, there are also growing movements calling for an end in violence, respect of the democratic processes as well as reform. Space for these voices to influence dominating political discourse is very limited and should be reinforced.

THE UN AND UNDP

The international community is watching this next chapter in Thai politics with a mixture of apprehension and concern. While small, parallel facilitation efforts are pursued by a few bilateral allies of Thailand to help address the stalemate some countries are looking increasingly at the United Nations to take on coordination/facilitation efforts to monitor the situation and possibly prevent it from further deterioration. In recent meetings with the RC/RR several Ambassadors underscored that "the UN has an important role to play." The stage for an amplified role of the UN was set by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's calls to both, the PM as well as the Democrat Party leader Abhisit, which was widely reported in the Thai media announcing it as the launch of "the UN's Thai mediation effort"¹. Adding to this was the SG's statement in which he expressed his concern about the situation in Thailand, called 'on all sides to exercise restraint,

¹ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/lite/topstories/388991/un-leader-launches-thai-mediation-effort>

refrain from violence, show full respect for the rule of law and human rights and encouraged all concerned to resolve their differences through genuine dialogue and peaceful means’.

The current environment provides a rare opening for the UN and in particular UNDP to take on a more active role on the ground following the Government’s requests for support. On the UN side so far only the OHCHR has responded to this call picking up on the Government’s request for HR monitoring. OHCHR has set up a mission to observe the situation in order to prevent violence and human rights abuses. This includes organizing visits of a small group of OHCHR Human Rights Monitors to the main protest sites throughout Bangkok, liaising with all actors (protesters, political parties, police, army, pro-government groups) and coordinating with international NGOs and national partners such as the National Human Rights Commission. Overall this engagement of the UN has been reflected positively in the Thai media and was welcomed by the international community in Thailand.

AREAS OF IMMEDIATE ENGAGEMENT

Based on a number of bi-lateral, informal consultations held over the past few weeks between the RC/RR and several key stakeholders, and also taking into consideration the deteriorating security situation, UNDP is seeking an emergency grant under TRAC 3 Category II to focus on three main areas in which the UN and in particular UNDP will take on a more proactive role: a) help assess & monitor the current situation to inform the UN/UNDP programming and to prevent further deterioration, b) engage key stakeholders across partisan lines in a constructive dialogue around key governance reforms as a means of conflict transformation; and, c) provide a better UN coordination of information and responses to the current conflict.

1. Assessments/ information sharing

As the security and political situation intensifies in the run-up to possible but highly contested elections more violent incidents are to be anticipated before as well as after. The street protests remain violent ‘background noise’ to the power struggle at the level of the political elite where one side is now trying to prevent elections and push for the appointment of a “People’s Council” the other is desperately trying to push for elections in the face of challenges from independent state institutions. The conflict that already paralyzes the country’s governance system threatens to grow with a high potential for widespread casualties and nationwide rioting. Ensuring that the face of violent conflict in the streets of Bangkok and across the country gets monitored will help the UN system calibrate its programming and also be informed. It will also bring more transparency to this conflict, can help to prevent an escalation and massive rights violations.

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at Chulalongkorn University and their allies (around 6 field networks) joined forces under the name “**Coalition Center for Thai Violence Monitoring** (เครือข่ายพลเมืองเฝ้าระวังความรุนแรงทางการเมือง)” which gathers information and established a sort of early-warning system for political violence. This Network offers unique real-time assessment, access and monitoring of acts of political violence through their website (<http://www.thaiviolencewatch.com/>) and provides inputs for its humanitarian volunteers working on preventing violence and mitigating in the streets by linking with both the police and protesters.

UNDP Thailand will work closely with the Center to expand the scope of their real-time coverage of violent incidents and damages and will calibrate the information for the UN system and other international partners, to closely monitor and assess the situation as it develops over the coming weeks and months.

2. Conflict transformation through reform: UNDP Roundtables

A number of stakeholders in the Government and the Opposition are getting increasingly frustrated with the prospect of months-long political deadlock. In the face of this stalemate a small window has opened to re-engage proponents from all sides to discuss inevitable governance reforms the country needs to move out of this perpetuating cycle of political conflicts.

UNDP Thailand wants to use this window of opportunity to initiate as soon as possible a series of round-tables on thematic, structural key reform issues. Even though round-tables are a more traditional tool they could help in the current standoff to 1) create urgently needed platforms for dialogue and meetings between a reform group consisting of key national stakeholders and actors across partisan lines around agreed, substantive issues of reform; and 2) identify key issues of cross-partisan interest to sketch out a possible way forward in a number of key governance reform areas.

The preliminary research results delivered by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies as part of the ongoing DPA/BCPR Project highlighted once more that the political conflict in Thailand evolves mainly around three key issues namely a) decentralization, b) Responsive Governance and c) income inequality.

Building on this UNDP plans to organize the first series of round-tables on the issue of Decentralization to look at the highly centralized governance system and horizontal inequality which has been identified as the root causes for conflict in Thailand that causes unequal development among regions, the widening gap between the rural and urban population as well as the unequal access to resources and financial capital.

Since the issue of decentralization will be among the top priorities of every new (or old) government an immediate engagement with the stakeholders could provide an important head-start to get this reform off the ground. The engagement on this particular topic will build on extensive, past work of UNDP Thailand on decentralization reform and an impressive UNDP network of technocrats and politicians from all sides of the spectrum interested to push the envelope.

The series of round-tables would draw participants including key Thai peace networks and organisations, other relevant government and non-government bodies, selected relevant international partners (UN, HD, FES). Building on the findings of the Study from the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies the round-tables – to be led by one or several international experts - would start out as a moderated discussion among the main partners reflecting on commonalities and points of disagreement to define concrete recommendations and to map out steps towards the implementation of sectoral reforms in Thailand.

3. UN Coordination of information and responses

The evolving situation has made it necessary for the UNRC/RCO to play a stronger coordination, convening and information sharing role over the past 2 months. This role has significantly stretched the limited resources and capacity within the RC office and UNDP. In order to effectively play a coordination and information sharing role, the RC/RCO would urgently need additional resources to exercise a credible convening role and to strengthen the information gathering and analysis capacities.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Targeted Period	February-June 2014		
Intended Outputs	Indicative Activities	Responsible Partners	Inputs
Output 1: Assessment and Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support to the technical build-up of the Center’s online data and monitoring systems. - Support to the overall management and set-up of the Center’s humanitarian volunteer network. - Develop systematic media monitoring through the Center (including traditional Thai language and social media). - Provide translation capacities to provide key information in English. - Establish real-time information dissemination mechanism to inform UN agencies, the interested international community and link-up to OHCHR’s monitoring work. 	Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (Chulalongkorn University), Coalition Center for Thai Violence Monitoring	Short-term technical support, translation capacity and technical consultancy for a total cost of \$40,000
Output 2: Conflict Transformation/UNDP Roundtables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify key national stakeholders and actors across partisan lines and organize as key reform group. - Through the organization of roundtables 1) create urgently needed platforms for dialogue around agreed, substantive issues of reform, and 2) identify key issues of cross-partisan interest to sketch out a possible way forward in a number of key governance reform areas. - Provide technical support in selected sectoral reform areas. 	UNDP Thailand, Selected Government and CSO counterparts	Short-term technical support, and consultancies, administrative support and operational cost for a total of \$35,000
Output 3: UN Coordination of Information and Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize information and coordination sessions with international community (bilateral, EU, ADB etc.) - Provide in-depth media analysis to inform the UNCT and other interested partner. - Expand outreach to regional/provincial actors in the country to widen and feed into political and risk analysis for UNCT and other partners. 	RCO	Temporary additional research/staff capacity, provided for a total cost of \$25,000
TOTAL			\$100,000

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This Project will be direct implemented by UNDP and will follow established procedures of UNDP for effective delivery of project results. Both Program Specialist of Governance Unit and Chief, the Office of UN RC will be mainly responsible for the implementation and coordination throughout the project implementation period. They will supervise consultants to deliver expected outputs and results and will also be responsible for monitoring activities providing quarterly progress and final reports. In addition, UNDP support services will be available through the Governance Unit/RCO as well as Operations Support Team which will provide support in the areas of budget management, procurement, finance and other operational services further identified and/or needed in due course.

MONITORING

This project will follow Programme and Operations Policy and Procedures while adjusting its monitoring as appropriate to the implemented activities and capture expected outputs through the internal regular meetings. The final report will be submitted to BCPR at the end of project.

ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Year: 2014

EXPECTED OUTPUTS <i>And baseline, indicators including annual targets</i>	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMEFRAME				RESPONSIBLE PARTY	Funding Source	PLANNED BUDGET	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			Budget Description	Amount (USD)
Output 1: Assessment and Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support to the technical build-up of the Center's online data and monitoring systems. - Support to the overall management and set-up of the Center's humanitarian volunteer network. - Develop systematic media monitoring through the Center (including traditional Thai language and social media). - Provide translation capacities to provide key information in English. - Establish real-time information dissemination mechanism to inform UN agencies, the interested international community and link-up to OHCHR's monitoring work. 	X	X	X		Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (Chulalongkorn University), Coalition Center for Thai Violence Monitoring	TRAC 1.1.1.3	Consultant Contractual Services Printing and Publication Translation cost	15,000.00 15,000.00 6,000.00 4,000.00

EXPECTED OUTPUTS And baseline, indicators including annual targets	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMEFRAME				RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET		
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Funding Source	Budget Description	Amount (USD)
Output 3: UN Coordination and Information and Responses	- Organize information and coordination sessions with international community (bilateral, EU, ADB etc.)	X	X	X		UN RCO	TRAC 1.1.3	Individual contract	16,000.00
	- Provide in-depth media analysis to inform the UNCT and other interested partner.						Meeting packages	2,000.00	
	- Expand outreach to regional/provincial actors in the country to widen and feed into political and risk analysis for UNCT and other partners						Travel	4,000.00	
							Equipment	3,000.00	
							TOTAL		65,000.00