

SUCCESS STORY

Child-Centered Disaster Preparedness in Thailand

USAID supported the distribution of 10,000 DRR storybooks to students in flood-prone provinces.

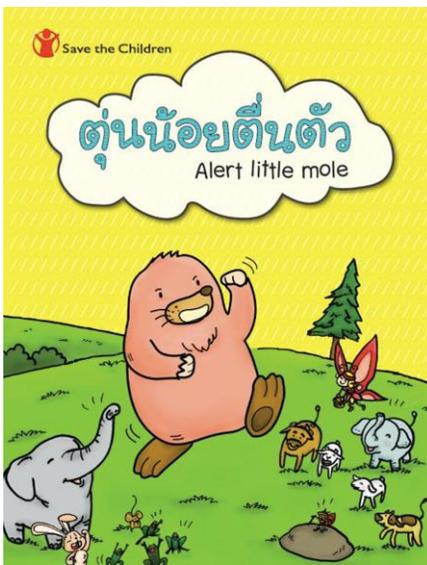


Photo Courtesy of SC

The success of “Alert Little Mole” prompted the American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand to publish and distribute an additional 10,000 copies to supported schools. SC also translated the story into Burmese and Karen and published 5,000 copies in each language to educate communities in flood-affected areas along the Thai–Burma border. USAID plans to continue using the storybook and related DRR activities to educate children throughout Thailand.

What can a mole teach children about preparing for a disaster? Quite a bit if the mole is the main character of “Alert Little Mole,” a storybook designed by USAID partner Save the Children (SC) to educate Thai primary school students and their communities about simple ways to prepare for and respond to disaster situations.

In 2011, massive flooding throughout 65 of Thailand’s 77 provinces caused significant displacement and destruction, underscoring the need for disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in Thailand’s most flood-prone communities. In total, floods affected an estimated 13.6 million people, including approximately 3.8 million children.

To augment disaster preparedness efforts in flood-prone areas, USAID supported SC in producing and distributing 10,000 “Alert Little Mole” storybooks to students in 30 schools in Ayutthaya, Chai Nat, Kan- chanaburi, Pathum Thani, and Samut Sakhon provinces. The 64-page storybook uses animal characters to illustrate how communities can prepare for disasters, focusing specifically on flood situations and highlighting both positive and negative practices during emergencies. DRR activities accompany the storybook to help children learn about different types of disasters and provide simple steps to reduce risks, such as packing an emergency bag, drawing maps to pinpoint hazardous areas in their schools, and identifying community members who may need assistance.

With USAID support, SC also trained 70 educators to develop organizational preparedness plans, incorporate DRR into school curricula, and facilitate child-centered disaster preparedness activities using the “Alert Little Mole” storybook. The trained educators introduced “Alert Little Mole” to their schools during a one-day book launch that integrated DRR activities for approximately 2,200 students. SC and local partners distributed the remainder of the storybooks to children in flood-prone communities throughout the five provinces.

Students and teachers responded enthusiastically to “Alert Little Mole” and related DRR activities. Students not only learned how to prepare for a disaster, but also became motivated to educate others. Teachers appreciated the relevance of the story for Thai communities and how easily they could incorporate the storybook into multiple classes, such as reading, art, and English. Teachers also expressed optimism that students would share the storybook with their families, further increasing DRR awareness and promoting community-wide preparedness.