

Leadership, Flooding and Uncertainty: The Case of Two Universities in the 2011 Thailand Flood

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Abstract

During the period from September to December 2011, Thailand experience devastating and pervasive flooding that covered over 10% of the country in water. Many factories, businesses and homes were flooded with as much as three meters of water and rendered inaccessible and unusable. The Ministry of Education declared an official school holiday that lasted a month, and some universities were flooded so badly that they had to evacuate for up to six months.

This paper provides a case study of two universities, Stamford International University (STIU) and Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), each of which was impacted by the flooding in different ways. STIU has two campuses, one in projected flood zone in Bangkok and one far from the flooding in Hua Hin. AIT has one campus in an area that experienced heavy flooding, and much of their campus was submerged under two meters of water. They relocated their entire operation to STIU's Hua Hin campus for up to six months. There was considerable resistance to relocating more than 200 kilometers away, and the AIT leadership had to make a strong case that it was in everybody's best interests to do so. At the same time, attendance at STIU was about 50% of enrollment, many domestic students had problems caused by flooding, and parents of international students were calling their children to return home from Bangkok. The case studies review the conditions, options, choices and communication that took place to resolve flooding issues with the least disruption to the academic calendar and students' studies.