

Science-based risk communication and managing infodemic: Thailand COVID-19 experiences

Viroj Tangcharoensathien

Orana Chandrasiri

International Health Policy Program, Thailand

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Translating Sciences To Policy And Manage The Infodemic

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Overview of COVID-19 situation in Thailand

13 Jan: The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Thailand

1 Mar: COVID-19 officially declared as a dangerous communicable disease

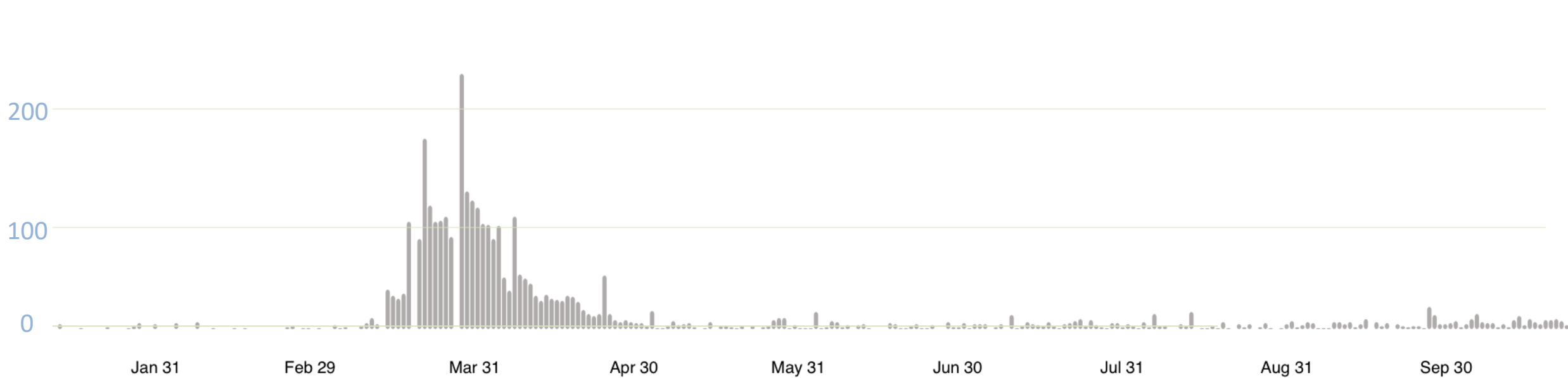
26 Mar: Thailand declared a state of emergency

3 April: Curfew 10pm - 4am

29 Jun: Extended the Emergency Decrees to 31 July

1 Jul: Educational institutions resumed

13 Jul: Egyptian soldier case in Rayong
17 Jul: Sudan diplomat case



12 Mar: established CCSA, one day after WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic

15 Mar: Spike of infections from imported cases in boxing stadium & entertainment venues

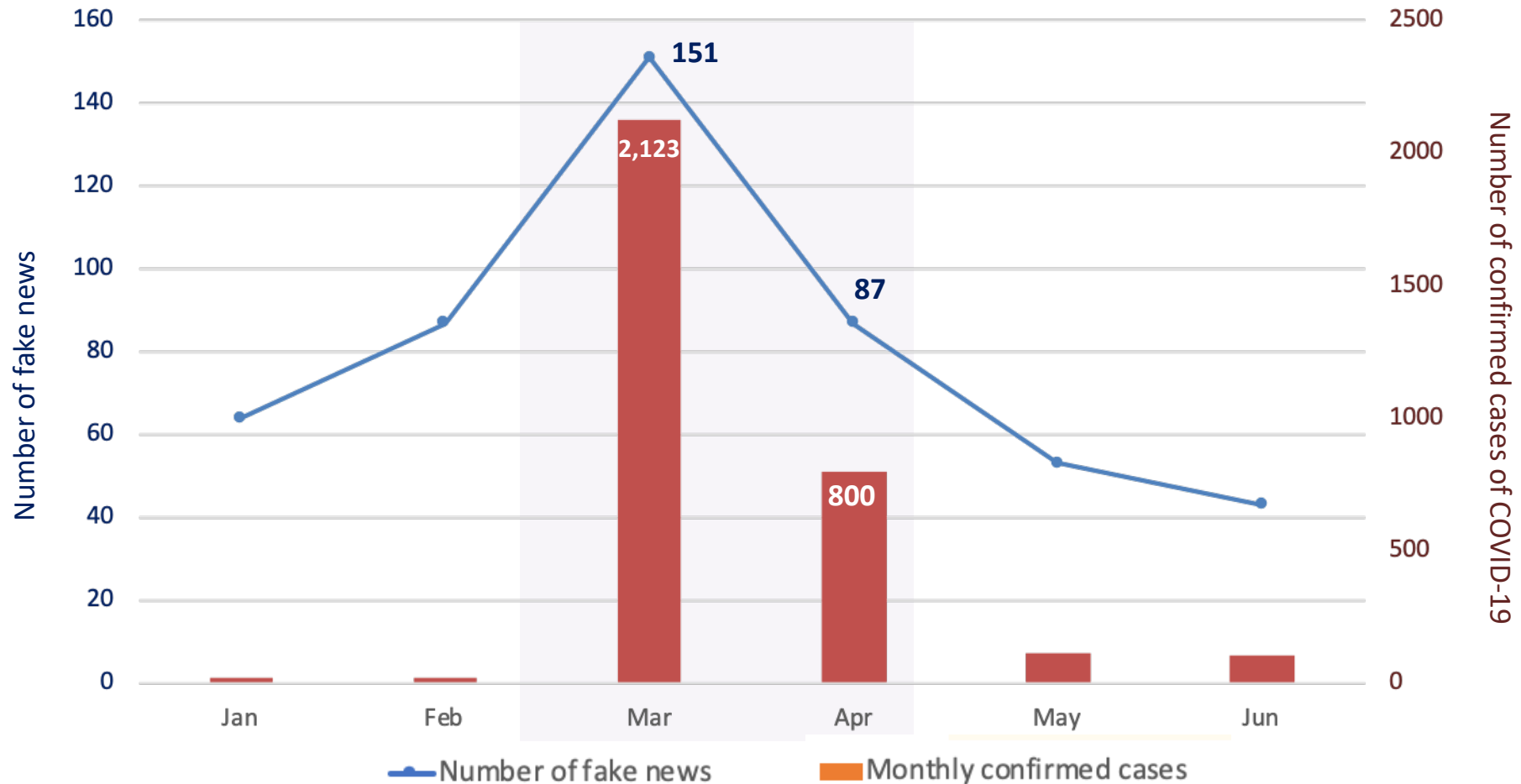
4 May: First time that no new infections reported locally

16 June: Cabinet endorses three packages to revive ailing

8 Jul: First wave of the COVID-19 outbreak ended

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>

COVID-19 Risk Communication:

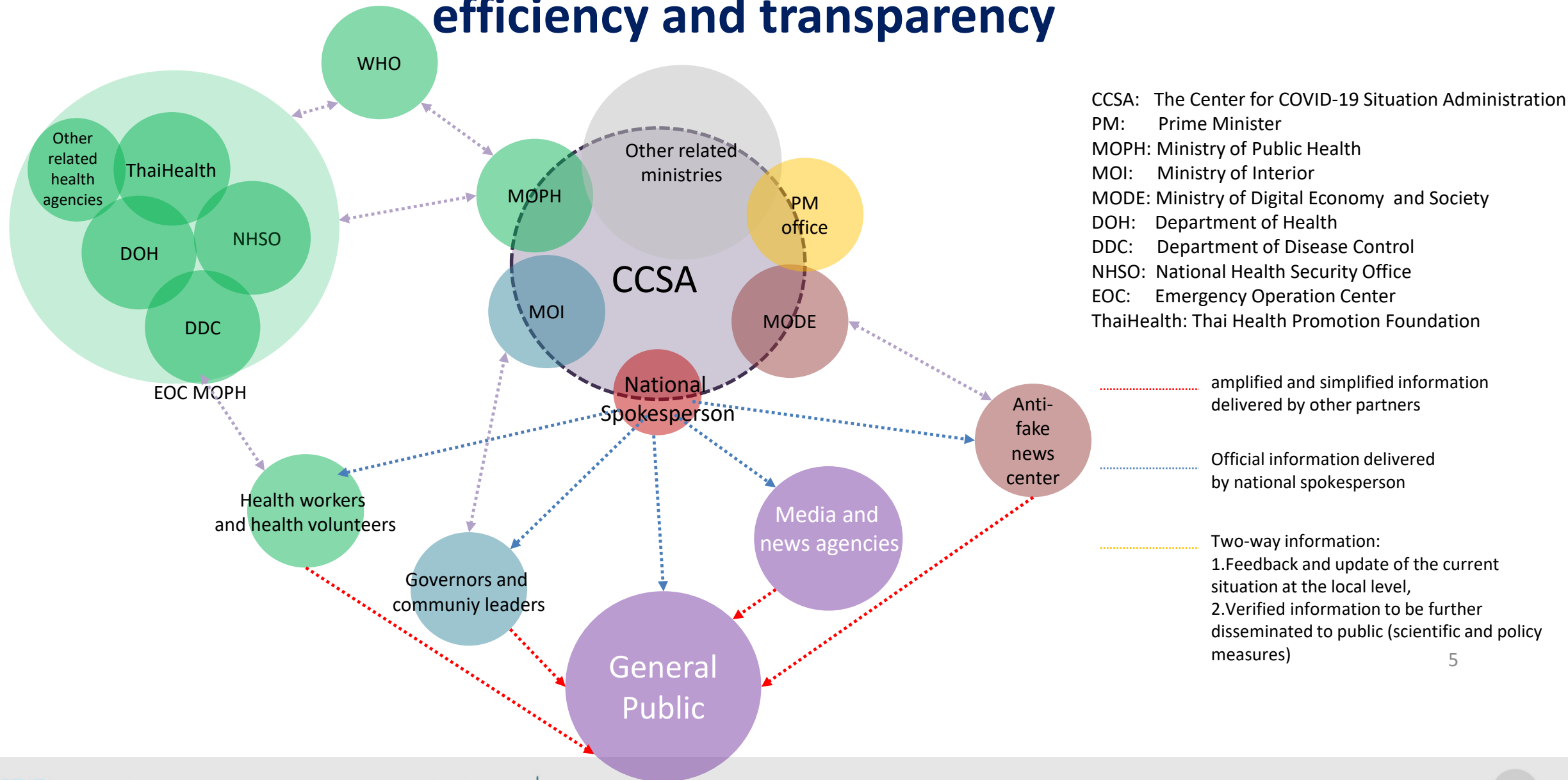
Sciences based and whole-of-government approach

- **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
- **Sciences based** 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.

Risk communication governance: efficiency and transparency



Fact check: actors and capacity

> one million
media
messages per
month

Source:

<https://store.wisesight.com/product/covid19-daily-summary/>

Thailand: during 1-31 March 2020, peak period



184 verifications

Anti-fake News Centre: official government responsible agency under MODE. It applies the principle of authoritative fact check.
<https://www.antifakenewscenter.com>



84 verifications

Collaborative fact checking: civil society organization. Encourage everyone to be a part of fact check.
<https://cofact.org>



46 verifications

Sure before share: media agency work in collaboration with academia/ experts for fact check.
<https://www.facebook.com/SureAndShare/>

International: January-September 2020



38 Verifications

Agence France-Presse: AFP Thailand
<https://factcheck.afp.com/afp-thailand>



29 Verifications

WHO Myth Buster
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters#virus>

WHO SEARO Fact or Fiction
<https://www.who.int/southeastasia/outbreaks-and-emergencies/novel-coronavirus-2019/fact-or-fiction>

Thailand infodemic management

Goals: 1) Monitor citizens' behaviors and attitudes, 2) Evaluate risk communication systems

- **A 10 weekly online surveys**

- 8 weekly assessment of citizen's media literacy,
- 2 weekly assessment of risk communication systems

- Quantify media literacy index:

- (1) Capacity to differentiate misinformation,
- (2) Not-propagating/sharing false statements

4 May-25 June 2020: total respondents 52,354

- Assessment of risk communication system

26 June-9 July 2020: total respondents 15,973



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

Summary findings: 10 weekly online surveys

- **Misinformation is everywhere**
distributed nation-wide to different socio-demographic groups which can hinder the efforts to control COVID-19
- **82%** have seen misinformation and disinformation in social media in the last month.
- Media literacy index **69%**
 - **54%** can differentiate false or misleading information related to COVID-19
 - **87%** did not share false or misleading information to social media platforms.
- Higher education, female and older age group have higher media literacy, though young adults do not further share fake news
- 42% of respondents verify fact, mostly from public sources.
- Fake news related to COVID-19 prevention are mostly practiced by respondents.

Effective infodemic management:

Critical attributes

- Sustain national fact check capacity
- Ensure reliable government sources for verification
- Raise public awareness on the misinformation
- Disseminate scientific evidence from authentic sources e.g. WHO in local language
- Effective and timely legal sanction on individuals who produce misinformation
- Advocating public not to propagate misinformation in social media

Lessons

- **Effective risk communication:** ensure citizens' adherence to public health and social measures.
- Message to vulnerable population required **tailored content, multi-lingual** and whole-of-society support
- **Legal framework, fact check and law enforcement can** combat misinformation and disinformation.
- Effective governance and function of CCSA, transparent evidence gains citizens' trust and adherence
- Multi-lingual messages are effective for international migrant workers
- Migrant health volunteers play significant role
- Still limited capacity on fact check
- Major pain points: inadequate and untimely legal sanctions especially cross-border misinformation
- Lack of public participation on fact check



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