UNESCO to Join Thai Government For Emergency Rehabilitation

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Bangkok, 14 November 2011 – UNESCO Bangkok experts recently met at the Prime Minister’s Office with senior government officers along with public and private sector representatives to discuss possible cooperation for an immediate rehabilitation programme to the country’s worst flooding in decades.

The floods in Thailand have affected 28 of the 77 provinces nationwide, most of which are heavily or partially inundated and declared “disaster areas”, killing more than 320 people since late July and directly affecting the lives of 2.8 million people from 1.1 million households.

“[Thai] government has set up special committee groups to respond to flooding situations, one of which is an immediate rehabilitation committee for a short-term joint programme between government, public and private partners,” said Caolin Luthasuksiri, Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister, who chaired this first meeting.

The programme was initially divided into four major tasks: art therapy, environmental therapy, creative economy and monument restoration. UNESCO Bangkok has been requested to work with relevant agencies on creative economy trainings for entrepreneurs and restoration of the inundated World Heritage historic city of Ayutthaya.

Youngsup Choi, UNESCO Bangkok expert on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, said: “This short-term emergency programme should be strategically aligned with long-term recovery programme.

“Regarding the training programs for individuals, we can think of training programs which are related to the restoration activities, for example, training programs for construction works for damaged buildings, roads and historic monuments. Also it’s very important to have preventive measures to protect employees, and avoid lay off [during this crisis].

“Government can provide subsidy to employers to retain employees during the business stoppage and organize specific skill training programmes for employees which were not delivered during normal working days. If government agrees, we can put this proposal into plan of training,” said Mr. Choi.

UNESCO Bangkok has been requested by the Thai government to undertake a mission to the Ancient City of Ayutthaya to assess the impact to the World Heritage property from heavy flooding. The mission, which will include relevant national authorities and experts, is being arranged by Thailand’s Office of the Prime Minister and will take place this week.
Thailand is also applying for Emergency Assistance from the World Heritage Fund. Under the terms of the Fund, assistance may be requested to undertake emergency measures or to draw up an emergency plan for the safeguarding of the property.

“UNESCO has been coordinating with international experts to provide technical assistance to the flooding situation at Ayutthaya World Heritage Property. The expert assistance will help the Fine Arts Department with the immediate assessment and restoration effort as developing a long-term plan for mitigating flooding impacts at the site in the future,” said Montira Horayangura Unakul, heritage expert at UNESCO Bangkok.

Thailand is a member of the World Heritage Convention since 1987. The historic city of Ayutthaya was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1991.

For more information, http://whc.unesco.org/

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