

# **Effective Role of Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergencies in Thailand**

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## **Abstract**

*This study included a discussion of the critical role VHVs played in the control, prevention, and monitoring of the Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand, as well as a review of related literature, with 11 of 59 topics chosen. The purpose of this study was to investigate and improve VHV competence in the control, prevention, and monitoring of the Covid-19 pandemic. The outcomes of the study indicated that VHVs were important in efficiently managing, preventing, and monitoring the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 until the present. As a result, in addition to maximizing the potential of VHVs, it is important to be varied, knowledgeable, and up to date on current events. However, the most cost-effective utilization of resources is referred to as "Sufficiency Healthcare, High Benefit, Most Economical" when utilizing the concepts of sufficiency economics.*

**Keywords:** Effective Role; The Village Health Volunteers (VHVs); Response to the COVID-19; Pandemic Emergencies.

## **1. Introduction**

More than 204 million people have been diagnosed with coronavirus illness worldwide in 2019. Since June, the number of daily cases has risen to almost 600,000 each day. Since June, the number of daily cases has risen to almost 600,000 each day. Many outbreaks are still occurring in the United States, Iran, India, and

Brazil. The daily number of fatalities is expected to rise to more than 10,000 people each day, putting the overall number of deaths at more than 4.3 million. The current wave of infections in the pandemic has resulted in 788,126 cases in Thailand. The number of infected people on a daily basis has remained consistent at about 20,000. The outbreak has expanded throughout the nation, with the central, northeastern, and lower southern regions seeing a significant number of new cases. This wave of epidemics led to the deaths of 6,701 people, resulting in a mortality rate of 0.85 percent. The elderly and those with chronic diseases who have never been vaccinated account for the majority of fatalities. The high number of infections in Thailand is anticipated to last for more than a week, despite the fact that more than 21.7 million treatments have been delivered. Surveillance in the pre-epidemic group should be extensively examined to identify risk areas and risk factors, as well as quick action to control the disease. Including communication to the public to maintain the intensity of disease prevention measures. Especially in highly controlled and strict areas, wearing masks, washing hands frequently, working at home as much as possible, reducing unnecessary travel, especially in places where there is a high risk of crowds, and getting vaccinated accordingly.

## **2. Role of the village health volunteers (VHVs) for resist COVID-19**

Over a million of VHVs operate in Thailand's villages and communities. As the COVID-19 pandemic increases, high-risk people are migrating from Bangkok to other provinces. To limit the spread of COVID-19, VHVs should be knocked on every house's door to notify and assist in preventing risk groups from spreading the virus. The VHVs processes are as follows:

- 1) Establish a "volunteer team against COVID-19" at the sub-district and village levels to inform and educate communities, with public health professionals standing as team leaders. Community leaders or local governments should lead teams that must utilize their power to keep at-risk populations at home from going out. Every province/district has a provincial emergency operations center (provincial EOC) and a district level emergency operations center (district level EOC) (District EOC). Leaders have the ability to use their powers; if they do not, they may be arrested and sentenced to prison or fined. VHVs must channel these abilities through all levels of leadership.

- 2) VHVs has been trained by health professionals in preventative and control measures, as well as timely COVID-19 surveillance and current information.

- 3) Health workers assess their knowledge and assess the health of VHVs before leaving for work. Those who are not ready to give additional training before going out to continue knocking on the door.

- 4) Prepare supplies and operational tools for VHVs in accordance with the following guidelines: 1) a hygienic mask or a cloth mask or wearing a face shield (Face shield or Shield mask), 2) Alcohol gel (more concentrated 70%) or alcohol spray (95% concentration), 3) Infrared thermometer and 4) Personal protective equipment (PPE) is used in cases where there is an infected person or a clear risk group.

- 5) VHVs is attempting to knock on the door of every household by knocking on just 8 to 15 of the homes for which they are responsible, and with the support of health workers. In order to operate, there are four steps: Knocking on all of the house's doors. VHVs talked to people about the question. 1) Is there anyone in this house who is sick? (To be transported to health workers). 2) Is the house newly arrived from

another province? (For special care). 3) How can this house be prevented from contracting COVID-19? (To distribute information leaflet). When the answer is received, continue to follow the academic guidelines.

6) Summarizing the results of VHVs to report on 4 groups of people in that household.

6.1) A group of individuals who are unwell (perhaps with COVID-19 or other infections), with a temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius or higher, coughing, sore throat, or shortness of breath, should be reported to public health officials for medical tests immediately.

6.2) Groups at risk of having COVID-19 in their bodies but not showing symptoms, such as those who have recently traveled abroad. Groups who have recently arrived from Bangkok and its vicinity.

6.3) Groups who are in close contact with or in the presence of COVID-19 patients. These groups of people who are suspected of having COVID-19 must self-isolate at home for 14 days from the date of arrival and report to the village headman for assistance in quarantining according to stringent rules.

6.4) The elderly and chronically ill patients who become infected with COVID-19 have a very high risk of mortality. As a result, these individuals must live in a hygienic environment and take extra care to avoid becoming infected with COVID-19. Knocking on every door at least twice, 7 days apart, to cover asymptomatic patients and those who have recently arrived in the village.

### **3. Method**

This study was a review of the crucial role VHVs played in the control, prevention, and surveillance of the Covid-19 epidemic in Thailand, as well as a survey of relevant literature, with 11 of 59 subjects being chosen. The goal of this research was to examine and enhance VHV expertise in the control, prevention, and surveillance of the Covid-19 epidemic.

### **4. Finding**

Overall, the average score for effective implementation of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community of Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) in Thailand was very high, according to the study's findings (Nawsuwan K., et al., 2020). VHV had the potential to play a key role in Covid-19 control and prevention. Coronavirus 2019 control and health promotion have high levels of awareness, according to VHVs. The problems and obstacles are lack of cooperation in wearing masks, distancing, insufficient instruments and equipment, people's lack of understanding of infectious diseases, communication issues, limited funding, and insufficient medical professionals are among the challenges and barriers. (Chinnabutr W., et al., 2020). The findings showed that the model of VHVs and community participation for Covid19 infection prevention and surveillance was made up of the technique of promoting VHVs and community involvement as well as the Covid19 prevention and surveillance activities. EpiScanCovid19, a Geospatial tool for Covid19 preventing infection and surveillance. The success of the program was demonstrated by VHVs' perception of the dangers, education of community members, prompt reporting of occurrences to SDHPC or PCU, and frequent monitoring of VHVs activities by health staff. Early detection of contact cases and fast containment of the spread were the results. (Nawamawat J., et al., 2020). The overall role performance of village health volunteers was excellent, particularly in disease prevention and health promotion. Lack of collaboration in wearing masks, distance, insufficient instruments and equipment,

individuals who do not understand infectious diseases, communication problems, limited money, and insufficient healthcare providers are among the challenges and barriers. (Chaobanpho Y., 2021). Village Health Volunteers in Thailand numbered well over a million when COVID occurred. They were recruited and trained to combat COVID, disseminate health information and resources, take temperatures, monitor gatherings and movements in the village, refer patients to their local hospital, and coordinate activities between the community and public health officials in real time. (Anjalee Cohen, 2020). Thailand has efficiently responded to the COVID-19 epidemic by focusing on basic healthcare and fostering multi-sectoral teamwork, as well as communicating compelling health messages in an open and transparent manner. The importance of village health volunteers in disease control. One of the most important elements in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Thailand was the VHVs' ability to help both the government, health experts, and local people. VHVs' amazing performance throughout the epidemic included empowering individuals and communities (e.g., wearing masks, washing hands, and social distancing). Providing assistance to the local security system (e.g., proactive screening, timely reporting of early detected cases, follow-up on treated individuals, etc.). Assist the local community in operating the Sub-District Health Fund, which will be used to mobilize resources for COVID-19 prevention and control. (Tejativaddhana P., et al., 2020). VHVs are a powerful force comparable to a large army that has served on the front lines of the Ministry of Public Health and the people for more than 40 years. Thailand's success in reducing the covid-19 or any other pandemic is evident, and a large part of that achievement may be related to the proactive and practical implementation of VHVs. Surveillance, prevention, and control of disease are all roles that VHVs conduct in the region. Conduct health promotion activities for chronic and behavioral diseases, as well as health evaluations and management of health issues at the family and community levels. Referring patients to state-provided health care, as well as obtaining and utilizing local health information from public health authorities. (Kittiporn Nawsuwan, et al., 2020).

In Thailand, VHVs are an important part of basic health care. Since 1978, they have used their involvement in primary and community care in cooperation with the nation's public health officials. COVID-19 was initially identified as a highly infectious disease in Thailand on February 26, 2020. The country was able to successfully respond to the pandemic by concentrating effort and resources on primary healthcare. VHVs have made a substantial contribution to the prevention and control of COVID-19 in communities across the country. (Changsuphan S., et al., 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged the efforts of VHVs on a nationwide level, stating that the Thai village health volunteers have set an example for numerous nations across the world as unsung heroes who aid in the fight against COVID-19. Village health volunteers will focus on the high-risk population and collaborate with sub-district health care to guarantee disease management and preventive efficiency. (Pattaya Mail, 2021). Thailand was able to restrict the spread of the virus without using lockdowns or thorough COVID-19 testing due to the efficacy of VHVs in detecting cases and informing communities. This emphasizes how important VHVs are in responding to public health catastrophes like the COVID-19 Pandemic. To compensate for the shortage of health experts in the region, the Thai government trained Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) to both educate local communities and locate community instances of COVID-19. (Nayawadee Kaweenuttayanon, et al., 2021). Since 2020, the Thai government has provided rural health volunteers with an additional 500 baht per month as a special stipend to provide encouragement for their efforts to contain

the COVID-19 epidemic. The 500-baht special allowance is in addition to the 1,000-baht monthly stipend from the government. This special stipend will assist about 1.05 million individuals, including 1.04 million village health volunteers and 10,577 public health volunteers. Village health volunteers also play an important role as community healthcare managers, offering information and encouraging local people to be self-sufficient in their healthcare. The village health volunteers are frontliners who have been working together with the Ministry of Public Health's family care team and public healthcare workers in an efficient manner. They have earned recognition and praise from both the Thai people and the global community.

## **5. Conclusion and Discussion**

The study's findings revealed that VHVs were crucial in efficiently controlling, preventing and surveillance of the Covid-19 epidemic from 2020 until the present. As a result, in addition to developing the potential of VHVs, it is important to be diverse, knowledgeable, and up to date with the current situation, and the country's government or public health agency should adopt the following steps: 1) As a primary priority, offer encouragement and support. 2) Technology support, such as smart phones that can run a variety of apps while also upgrading the contemporary system. 3) Development of operational capability. 4) Development of a comprehensive network. 5) Promoting the progress of VHVs through performance benchmarking. 6) Educational assistance for VHVs, and 7) where applicable, career assistance for VHVs. Furthermore, the integration of VHVs and civil society participation is an essential factor that should not be ignored. Many concerns, such as diverse lifestyles, access to control, prevention, and surveillance of the 2019 coronavirus epidemic among vulnerable people, must be raised to the public's attention. There may be societal sensitivity, which might lead to the failure of the 2019 coronavirus outbreak's control, prevention, and surveillance. However, using the principles of sufficiency economics, the most cost-effective use of resources is referred to as "Sufficiency Healthcare, High Benefit, Most Economical."

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