

Health and Human Condition in the Era of Violence, Epidemics, and Environmental Disasters: Localizing Global Crises

Komatra Chuengsatiansup

Society and Health Institute, Bureau of Health Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

E-mail: komatra@health.moph.go.th

Abstract

This paper examines health and human condition in the contexts of persistent global violence, epidemics, and environmental disasters. It is clear that the globalized world has rendered these increasingly prevalent catastrophes a common global experience; eruption of armed violence, outbreak of new epidemics, and devastating natural disaster were often simultaneously viewed and immediately known around the world through global media network. Although the escalating prevalence of violence, epidemics, and natural disaster has become a cause for global concern, global consumption of tragic calamity, however, has transformed devastating events and local suffering into mere visual spectacles consumable by international audience. Global representation of catastrophic experiences tended to overemphasize exciting and spectacular aspects of the event. Once the excitement subsided, global media attention moved over to new and more dramatic episode of the next catastrophes. I argue that if we are to be more capable of handling global crises and their aftermath, we need a better knowledge of local circumstances and a more methodical understanding of the situations from local perspectives. In other words, we need to localize global crises in order to be more effective in maintaining preparedness, managing emergency situation as well as delivering humanitarian aids and facilitating healing for those whose lives were shattered by catastrophic devastations that have become an integral part of our contemporary risk society.