

Ben Weinstein, Ph.D, CGP has been living with his wife, Jen, in Thailand for a little more than one year. Ben is a psychologist, a member of the Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy (NSGP), an AGPA Member, and a Certified Group Psychotherapist. Jen, a nurse by training, has been working with Thai Catholic Commission for Migrants and Prisoners, a non-profit organization serving the refugees, migrants, and poor people across Thailand. Both were at home in Thailand when the disastrous tsunami struck on the morning of December 26, 2004. What follows this introduction is Ben's firsthand account of his onsite experiences. I think you will agree that it is a powerful, moving and deeply human narrative.

Fortunately, we were able to initiate direct contact with Ben. Ongoing consultative telephone sessions began between Ben and Bob Klein, AGPA President, to provide emotional support, opportunities to process what he was encountering, and to help him assess best courses of action in the situation. Ben recognized early on that to begin to deal with the enormous mental health needs engendered by this situation and to overcome the stigma associated with seeking such help, culturally sensitive group interventions would clearly be extremely valuable. Beginning to train the available corps of Thai providers to respond to the immediate and long-term service delivery needs would therefore be one of the most crucial task requiring attention.

With this in mind, a set of educational and training materials, including our 10 trauma training modules based on AGPA's experiences dealing with the aftermath of 9/11, were sent to Ben, along with basic public education information regarding mass trauma and its varied psychological sequelae. Given the scope of the tragedy, it makes sense to think about enlisting participation by trauma experts from different parts of the world to provide ongoing consultation and support; perhaps a pan-Asian mental health conference focused on education, training and problems of service delivery will be useful to think of for the months ahead. Reaching out to establish collaborative working relationships with the government and national international relief agencies who have established credibility and the necessary infrastructure to be helpful will be essential to any efforts undertaken.

We continue to talk with Ben on a regular basis. With his permission and his assistance, we will try to bring you further updates about his experiences as well as AGPA participation in the relief efforts.

Robert H. Klein, Ph.D., CGP, FAGPA  
President, AGPA

**January 5, 2005**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to thank everyone who has called and emailed to express interest and support. Your calls and emails have meant so much to me—in fact, they have helped re-energize me after an exhausting week.

I have received several hundred emails. In order to provide an initial response to all these messages, I'm writing this email. I will describe what I have seen and done over the last week, what I'm involved with at this time, and what my concerns are for the future.

What I have written below is based on my experience alone, and represents only my own opinions. I can only report my own experience, which in no way represents the full range of experiences of what has happened, even in the places where I was present. Other versions of events will differ from mine and both will be true.

### Monday December 27

The truth is that we didn't even know what had happened until 8am, local time, Monday morning. We were still sleeping when our good friend and colleague, Joel Friedman, from Boston called to ask if we were ok. I could hear the tension and concern in his voice.

Ok? Why wouldn't we be ok? What could prompt him to feel so anxious? Joel said there has been an earthquake and tidal wave. We were floored. We ran downstairs to an internet café (we don't have a telephone line or internet access at home) to go on the internet to get details. As I realized what had happened and what it meant, it became clear that I had to act.

My wife, Jennifer, and I have been living in Thailand for just over one year. I have been teaching psychology, doing some training and trying to set up a clinical practice. I have also spent a lot of time getting to know our Thai colleagues. I have tried to meet as many Thai psychologists as possible. I have also attended their annual conference for 2003 and 2004 (and was the only foreigner present each time!). And just to keep the record straight, I only speak rudimentary Thai.

Jen, who speaks more Thai than I do, is a registered nurse with a degree in international public health from BU. Two weeks before the disaster, she started working as the director for a non-profit organization serving the refugees, migrants, and poor people across Thailand. Her organization maintains an office in Phu Ket, to serve seafarers and fishermen, many of whom are Burmese refugees.

I have significant clinical experience with trauma, PTSD and addiction. After 9/11, I also received Red Cross training (from the inestimable Marsha Kovachs) on disaster mental health and attended a number of workshops on DMH. After Joel's call, and reading a few news stories, I realized the immediate and short-term needs for disaster mental health support. I also knew, from my acquaintance with my Thai colleagues, and the strengths and limitations of Psychology here, that there was virtually no-one else in this country, foreign or Thai, with training both in trauma and in disaster mental health.

I also remembered what I had been told. "Do not just go to the disaster scene to help." That was the specific instruction we had been trained to by the Red Cross. "Act through

channels, fit into the system.” If we just went, we would add to the chaos and get underfoot.

I started making calls. I called the embassy of every English-speaking country to offer help. The only ones interested were the British, who took my number and said they would call me back. It quickly became clear that most people had no idea what was going on and they were still trying to figure it out for themselves. Someone at the American Embassy told me they were receiving 1000 calls/hour from the US.

Through some friends, I got the phone number for the Thai Ministry of Public Health, rumored to be in charge of relief efforts (there is no equivalent for FEMA here, and no established procedures for something like this). I called the Thai Ministry of Public Health. I managed to speak with Captain Jutaporn, the individual responsible for organizing initial relief efforts.

To his credit, Jutaporn’s response to my call was “How soon can you come to the airport?” I packed a small bag and got in a taxi. We drove to a military airbase in the Saphan Mai area of Bangkok. When I arrived at the airfield, there was a large crowd of Thai military, doctors, nurses and police, waiting for the next transport. I was the only foreigner.

Shortly after my arrival, 2 diplomats from the French embassy arrived. They were being sent by their embassy to assess the situation and provide immediate support to French nationals impacted by the disaster. Once they arrived, we were all loaded onto a C-130 transport, configured for seating. 4 parallel rows of web seating, slung from hooks, ran down the aircraft, from front to back. So we faced the interior of the plane. I have never flown in an aircraft without windows before and I can only describe it as a bizarre experience.

You have to understand how shocking, and truly different this situation is for Thais. Nothing even remotely approaching this scale has happened here in living memory. A Thai friend of mine said to me over the phone “This is the worst thing to happen to us in 237 years” (although I’m not sure of the date, I am sure he was referring to the invasion of Thailand by Burma and the sacking of the ancient capital, Ayuthya, over 200 years ago. This is an event that looms large in the modern Thai consciousness.)

There have been some hurricanes that involved loss of life. I was told about 200 people die in a hurricane about 20-25 years ago. The systems here are simply not prepared to deal with something like (by virtue of having no experience with something like this). What is impressive is how quickly the government mobilized and responded in the absence of established procedures or coordination between ministries and other organizations.

We arrived at Phu Ket airport in the early afternoon. The situation was chaotic. Since no-one seemed to know what to do, I asked the French diplomats to help me get to the main processing center, which was being set up at Phu Ket Provincial Hall or sala klang in Thai. Many of you have already seen PK sala klang in news reports. That seemed to

me to be the place where I could be most useful without getting in the way of direct rescue efforts, which were taking place at the islands and beaches. In fact, at no point did I go to any of the actual coastal sites of the tidal wave. I wanted to be in the places where I could be of most use.

This sounds much more orderly than it actually was. No-one really appreciated the entire situation. No-one was calling the sala klang the “main processing center,” which in fact it was quickly becoming. Those of you familiar with disaster work can imagine the situation, where following a really large mass casualty incident, in the absence of established procedures or coordination, the response is developing on what amounts to an ad-hoc basis. The result: chaos. One of the biggest problems over the ensuing days would be getting accurate information for survivors.

I arrived at the sala klang with Alain and Remy in the afternoon. The situation was quite chaotic. Crowds of people wandering around. Thai and foreign survivors, who had been evacuated from Patong Beach, Phi Phi Island, or Khao Lak over the last 24 hours wandered around in small groups or individually. Personnel from the Israeli and Scandinavian embassies were already on the scene.

Survivors continued to arrive in a steady stream, in their dozens and hundreds, depending on how they were transported from the disaster area. For example, military authorities were using any available means of transport to bring people away from Phi Phi. Some were evacuated through Krabi and some through Phu Ket. Thai people would pick up foreigners and bring them to Phu Ket.

I immediately started walking around to familiarize myself with the situation and to see who was doing what. Since one of the most important roles I can play is to direct people to the appropriate places for information, clothing, shelter, or medical services, I had to find out how to do that. I found where there was food, water, and first aid. I also saw that they were organizing transport to shelters.

People were in the process of erecting tents and structures to start registering survivors and compiling lists of missing people. Many survivors, if not most, were demonstrating resiliency in terms of being able to stay collected, organized, and focus on moving on to the next step. I also started to identify people who appeared to be experiencing psychological crises.

I identified a small group of people gathered around a distraught woman, speaking to her in Hebrew. I approached them, and speaking in Hebrew identified myself and asked if I could help.

Yacov, from the embassy, asked me to speak with the young lady. I asked the crowd to step back and also requested that one of her friends stay with her. The young lady was not able to find her husband. She was naturally quite upset, and had also not slept or eaten for 24 hours. We spoke for about 20 minutes, after which she appeared much

calmer, expressed a desire to eat something, and started to think about what she wanted to do next. I left her in the good care of her friends and moved on.

There were so many. This same scenario repeated many times over the next day. Over the next 24 hours, I provided interventions in English, French, and Hebrew (languages in which I am proficient). I did my best to protect, direct, and connect people as the DMH model specifies. I spoke with people missing their spouses and/or other relatives. Many parents were missing children. Many had been holding their children while running from the wave when the wave hit and as they started tumbling and spinning, the child would slip from their grasp. Their anguish and despair was overwhelming. They literally could not stop asking themselves why they couldn't hold on to their child. Some families were missing multiple members.

For the record, I do not believe in providing psychotherapy or counseling at the scene of a disaster. In fact, my personal opinion is that may do more harm than good. I listen and reflect, without probing, deepening or exploring. My statements are guided by the following goals: to establish and increase a sense of safety, to decrease debilitating feelings of helplessness, to direct to proper resources for basic care, to provide accurate information about available options for action, to re-establish human connection that has been disrupted by the trauma (ideally with those who will remain with them once I have moved on). I wanted to help people stabilize and move on from the processing center to the next step (shelter, sleep, food, clothing, document replacement, and ultimately repatriation). Psychotherapy comes later.

On strange aspect of this situation is that because people lost everything, they also lost their passports, identification, money, credit cards, and plane tickets. On Monday evening the Thai police were starting to get set up to provide temporary identification papers for survivors that would allow them to travel and leave the country. All charges for every imaginable service (medical care, transport, immigration fees) were suspended and services offered free.

Many people showed the lacerations, scratches, bruising from being buffeted by the water and more lethally, by the debris in the water (most of the worst injuries were from debris carried by the water). People were triaged before coming to the sala klang, so the severely injured went straight to the hospital.

Many people, as you can imagine, still felt terribly unsafe. Some were still in shock, even without any other physical injuries. When there was word of aftershocks late Monday, some people started to panic. We reassured them that there was no danger at this location. I could already start to identify some individuals who might be high risk to develop PTSD. That is, those people who were not able to calm down their central nervous system hyperarousal and clearly suffering from lack of sleep. There were no psychiatrists available; only medical first aid was available at the processing center. If someone concerned us, we asked the Thais to get them to a hospital, which they did quickly and without asking questions.

Since there were many people doing well, I enlisted their help in a kind of buddy system. If I could identify someone doing well who was willing to help (they all were), I could pair them with someone, hopefully of the same nationality, who was not doing well. Not for psychological intervention, but to go together to register, to get something to eat, to go to the shelters together. And the fact is, many people were already doing this without prompting, especially the people who had been on Phi Phi.

From Sunday morning until Monday morning, these people had gone through something like a nightmare. They were on an island (Phi Phi) when the wave hit and most were not evacuated for 18 to 24 hours. Parts of the island were entirely submerged by the waves. A story I heard so many times I feel like I was there: *we were running from the wave and we can water right behind us. We are running toward the other side of the island. When we get about halfway across, we meet people running and screaming from the other direction. Then we see water in front of us too, and the waves meet and we are underwater.*

Once the water receded, they developed an amazing group dynamic of mutual help and assistance (unfortunately, this did not happen everywhere). They organized in rescue parties immediately and started digging people out and helping the severely injured. So instead of sitting helplessly, many of them, injured and shocked, were working selflessly to save others. Helicopters arrived Sunday evening. The severely injured were evacuated first and boats began to arrive Monday morning for everyone else (it was difficult to navigate at night since the sea was full of debris).

I can only describe the situation as darkness fell Monday evening as chaos almost resolving into something else, like a picture just starting to come into focus. Arrangements were being made for shelters (which had not been available the previous night) and clothing. Many survivors were wearing the clothing they had been wearing on the beach when the wave hit or that Thai people had handed to them in the street.

Thai people were arriving in their dozens to offer assistance in anyway possible. They came with water, food and clothing. They came to offer shelter and transport. Thai people took foreigners home. Please understand that despite the chaotic fluidity of the situation compounded with the lack of procedures and coordination, it was the profound generosity, the compassion and the determination to help of all the Thai people that were the glue holding things together during the initial phase.

I personally started to feel exhausted and somewhat desperate. I kept thinking that, in a Red Cross response, I would not be here alone and there would be someone for me to talk to, and to unload some of the intense feelings that were building up inside me. I also knew that I had chosen this course of action, and could choose what to do next.

Sometime after 2am, knowing that my ability to perform was diminishing, I went to a shelter set up at a college. I was able to sleep with survivors, on a straw mat on the floor, until about 5:30am. I woke up and “showered” by pouring bowls of water over my head from a barrel filled with water outside.

While we waited for transport to the sala klang, I helped survivors pick out clothing from piles that had been donated. It was a good opportunity to speak with people about anything at all, to make some small talk about the clothes (It's not Ann Klein, but...), and see people smile.

One of my impressions from all this is that if I am ever in a disaster, I want to be Swedish, Danish, or Finnish. There was a medical team from Finland at the sala klang Monday night. By Tuesday morning the Swedish and Danish embassies had established their own command posts at a hotel and sent a bus to the shelter at 8am to collect Scandinavian survivors (or anyone interested in going to the airport). On Tuesday afternoon, while assisting a very distraught Danish woman, still in shock, I was able to find a Danish psychologist who had just been flown in as part of team from Denmark!

Tuesday was much the same as Monday, except that the Situation was becoming more organized. Survivors continued to arrive. Around 500 people arrived from Khao Lak about 9am Tuesday morning. There was word that there were even more survivors coming from Phi Phi. We had been told Monday that the evacuation of Phi Phi was complete. I was told later that when the body recovery teams went in, they founds literally hundreds of people up in the hills who had been hiding and had been too afraid to come down the previous day,

The French diplomats I had meant had summoned a full team from their embassy. Other embassy personnel were arriving. Tuesday morning at 9am was the first time I saw American staff from the American embassy at the sala klang (although I have been told by them that someone was there Monday, the situation was so chaotic, I believe them).

On Tuesday, I was also in touch with Jen's local office. Their staff were fine and the fisherfolk they serve were spared the worst effects of the disaster. In fact, when I called, the staff were sheltering over a dozen Swedish survivors. They had already called the Swedish command post and said they didn't need any help from me.

It seemed Tuesday afternoon that the stream of survivors was ebbing (I didn't know this at the time, but the stream would resume Wednesday). I was also feeling exhausted. I was starting to worry whether or not Thai survivors would be able to receive quality mental health care. I suspected not. Not from lack of concern but from lack of expertise.

I learned that a processing center for foreign survivors had been established in a remote suburb of Bangkok. I decided Tuesday evening to return to Bangkok, and see how I could assist efforts there. I also felt a very strong need to be part of an organized effort versus being on my own. I also didn't want to be in the way or underfoot for authorities.

I got to the airport and boarded another C-130. This time, my fellow passengers were survivors, including many severely injured people being transferred to Bangkok. I only boarded once it was clear that all survivors and injured people who could travel at that time were already aboard. I got home in the early morning of Wednesday and went to

sleep for a few hours. In retrospect, I have felt deeply ambivalent about returning to Bangkok at that time. I have felt guilty knowing I could have stayed and helped more people.

There are a number of foreign therapists and counselors in Bangkok. We started calling each other on Wednesday and trying to get organized. We agreed to be available for any survivor or family member who needed help.

I received a call from the British embassy Wednesday morning. They asked for my assistance with a large number of distraught individuals arriving at the embassy. I was impressed with their grasp of what the situation called for, particularly as compared to the American embassy, and went straight over.

I spent most of the day at the embassy circulating around and speaking with people. I quickly found that I had more accurate information than the survivors or many of the staff. The situation in Bangkok was greatly complicated by locations being very spread out and a lack of coordination. Each embassy was establishing their own command post in Phu Ket for their citizens. Meanwhile the Thai authorities were organizing their own efforts. People were coming to the embassy looking for information that the Thai authorities had out at the processing center, far from the embassy. I met people who had been brought straight to Bangkok without being processed, and so had not registered their own presence with the authorities, or registered the missing people they were looking for. These people were quite upset and angry.

I made some recommendations to the staff at the British embassy, such as making information readily available for survivors by posting information about the situation and available resources, hospitals, etc near the door and was very pleased to see my advice taken seriously and acted upon.

Outside the embassy, life was going on as normal. It struck me as bizarre and almost infuriating that people were going about their normal business while something so terrible was happening and people were so greatly in need. On the sky train, I had the passing urge to scream at people. I wanted to upset them, to alert them to the seriousness of the situation, to shatter their blithe composure and shake them up. I recognized this feeling as one I have heard described many times by disaster survivors, trauma victims, combat veterans and others. It also alerted me to an urgent need to take care of myself in order to continue to be of use to others.

I was also calling all the Thai psychologists I knew and finding out what mental health efforts were underway and how I could support them. People started talking about training but there was nothing definite. My wife and I had been planning to move Thursday! With some help from our Thai landlord and his staff, who seemed personally grateful for what I was doing, we were able to move in about 2 hours on Thursday, after which I ran out to a series of meetings with Thai psychologists and professionals. A workshop was set for the following week. It was also about this time, I started sending out emails (maybe that was also Wednesday, I can't recall).

I emailed Walter Penk, one of my mentors and a scientist practitioner for whom I have enormous respect and admiration. Walter's response was immediate. He recommended I email the president of APA!! I felt ridiculous, but I did, not thinking about it or expecting much.

Friday, December 31: I tried to relax to day and recharge. Just to sit back and see what do to be of most use. We also planned to go over to a Thai friends' house in the afternoon. It felt frivolous to me, but it also seemed necessary to relax and recharge and gather some strength. It seemed to me there was still much work ahead. At the same time, I knew what was still going on and that people were working down at the sala klang in Phu Ket and all over Phang Na province. I felt guilty for leaving Phu Ket. I still can't tell if my justifications about relaxing were real or rationalization.

I received a call from the British embassy, asking me to go down to Phu Ket again, to assist at their command post. Since this met my requirement of being part of something organized, with support, I immediately agreed. They flew me down, where I met their amazingly hard-working staff from all over Asia (people were drafted and volunteered from India, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore to fill the breach).

I was thus in Phu Ket again over the weekend. I was involved in intervening with survivors, counseling families who were arriving to find their lost loved ones, making hospital visits, and supporting the staff at the command post in anyway I could. It was very satisfying work. I was able to function and to use all my skills as I ought in such a situation. It was especially important to me to support the embassy staff, who were potentially at risk for secondary trauma. I was really satisfied to find that the people in charge listened to my suggestions for small, stress reducing changes, for short rotations on emotionally intense tasks, and so on. We were working 12-16 hours days, which shifted to 10-12 hour days just over the weekend as the situation continued to evolve, to become less chaotic.

I revisited the sala klang and found the situation there much less frantic. There was much more organization. Most survivors were gone and now there were people looking for loved ones and families arriving from all over the world. And in fact, the inchoate mass of foreign volunteers, people like myself, who had just shown up, had started to organize themselves! They established names (International Coordination Center For Victims), leaders, crews, and procedures! They even had counselors available. Although, I don't personally believe in providing psychotherapy or counseling at the scene of a disaster, beyond those interventions necessary to help insure safety, decrease feelings of helplessness, and increase stability, it was really an impressive degree of organization.

The situation was so complicated and people continued to pour in. Families of foreign victims were starting to arrive to look for their loved ones. Survivors continued to appear all over the place. We had word of Brits in the hospital in Nakon Si Thammarat, 500 km away, on the opposite coast. We had no idea how they got there. There was even still a trickle of survivors, people who had been staying with Thai families or hiding. We

would visit a hospital and be told there were no foreigners there, and receive a call 2 hours later, to discover there were a dozen foreigners there. There were some complicated situations over people with multiple nationalities (which I thought the staff of the British embassy handled with great care and tact). In fact, overall I was deeply impressed with the British embassy staff humanity and caring.

Sometime over the weekend, I checked my email only to realize that the president of APA had responded to my message and had shared with others and that I now had several hundred unread emails! I started to receive calls from American and Canadian psychologists with offers of help. It was like a jolt to realize this and experience the sense of support and relief that came with that realization. Of course, I had no time to respond to the messages.

I returned to Bangkok Monday evening, with the knowledge that a team of British disaster mental health professionals was on the way and would arrive shortly. There is one incident that occurred that weekend which I am not satisfied with my own conduct. At the British embassy command post, we received several increasingly alarming calls that foreign volunteers at the sala klang were being traumatized by being asked to do things that were inappropriate (such as moving highly deteriorated bodies) or by working for too long. The shift chief asked me to stop at the sala klang on my way to the airport, to make an appraisal and perhaps constructive suggestions.

I did and asked to meet with the three volunteer coordinators for the organizations I mentioned above. Instead of asking them for their views on the situation, or offering to make suggestions on the uses of volunteers at a disaster scene, I started by angrily accusing them of negligence and being responsible for traumatizing the volunteers they were responsible for. The conversation went downhill from there. Frankly, since the coordinators seemed to me, in retrospect, to also have been traumatized by their work, I am surprised they didn't physically attack me. I may well have deserved it.

Two of three walked away in anger and one stayed. We engaged in a brief shouting match and then calmed down. It quickly became clear that he was as horrified as me with what happened (volunteers moving decomposing bodies for hours at a time) and that he already felt responsible for what had happened. I was quickly overcome with remorse and shame for attacking him, but I couldn't undo my poor conduct. We spoke together for a while. Mark is clearly a deeply humane and caring individual with great strength placed into a chaotic and virtually impossible situation. I owe him and his colleagues a sincere apology. I apologized to him and made some suggestions. We finished amicably and I hope he will be well. I went to the airport to go home and he went back to work. He is probably still at his post as you read this, after 10 days straight. I arrived home late Monday and slept for 12 hours. [I'm not sure why I feel compelled to share this incident, which somehow stands out from all the good work we did].

I am humbled to have been and to continue to be in contact with survivors, families, staff, and volunteers, foreign and Thai who showed such greatness of spirit and strength of

heart in the face of such devastation, horror, and loss. I am at a loss to describe my feelings of appreciation and gratitude to everyone who has contacted me.

The Future:

To be honest, I am no longer so worried about foreign survivors or families of victims. Their needs are real and profound. And these folks will have access to world-class medical and mental health services in their home countries. I have become increasingly concerned about the Thai survivors whose very communities have been shattered, literally washed away: homes, workplaces, community centers, individuals and whole families. Foreign survivors will go home to their jobs and families. Thai survivors, like the people around the Indian Ocean, have nowhere to go.

For example, workers from another one of Jen's offices in Sri Ratcha have identified a group of 3000 sea gypsies (semi-nomadic people who travel up and down the coastal areas, living in their boats) whose boats were destroyed by the tidal wave. They are conducting a needs assessment with those people so they can start to help them rebuild their community. This is one small example from areas where the news cameras have not gone.

In fact, if one watched only the news coverage from Thailand, one might conclude that only a few beaches packed with tourists had been effected. Far from it. The wave did not discriminate between resorts and villages as it washed across the entire coast. And this destruction pales in comparison to Aceh. But it doesn't help to make comparisons.

And the simple, stark fact is that trauma and other mental health impacts of disaster on individuals, families, and communities are not well understood here. In fact, the task is not so much one of public education about trauma as of also raising awareness that there is a natural mental health impact of disaster. There is little public awareness in Thailand of mental health issues, beyond the stark and stigmatizing dichotomy: sane or crazy.

I have realized that the way I can be most useful is not by providing clinical services but by helping my Thai colleagues to build their own local capacity to provide services. Despite having some expertise, I am no expert. But I have knowledge and experience, and I am here and ready to help. The needs for training over many: disaster mental health, rebuilding communities, psychopharmacology for survivors, assessment, just to name a very few. I start doing workshops for the Ministry of Public Health this week and will continue for as long as necessary.

I hope that in the coming weeks and months we will be able to call on your assistance to help, particularly in this area of training and helping professionals here develop their capacity to treat survivors: children, adults, families, and communities.

If anyone is aware of a grant we could apply for, to propose a training conference or series of training workshops, where we can obtain the funds to bring real experts to Thailand and support the local efforts here, please let me know.

It is absolutely essential that we conduct these activities with the full participation, in fact, at the behest of our Thai colleagues. In my case I should say my Thai hosts, since I am in essence a guest here in Thailand. I have always been treated with the greatest courtesy and respect and have never for a moment regretted our choice to live here. Despite that fact that the circumstances are horrible, I have found myself grateful that I am here now, and I have the opportunity to give something back to the Thai people.

My best wishes to all of you. There are hard days ahead but I feel recharged and full of optimism that we will help here, that we will shine a bright light into the darkness for many families and communities.

Ben Weinstein, PhD