



## **Press Release**

### **The Department of Mental Health Collaborates with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and TTA Group to Launch the BuddyThai Application for Helping Bullied Children and Youths with the Target to Reduce the Youth Suicidal Rate and Increase Their Self-defence Skills**

**Bangkok, Thailand, November 22, 2022** – Bullying occurs in a wide range of societies, especially in the cyber era, when everyone is free to use media and express opinions without ever thinking about how their behaviour may have negative mental and physical effects on other people. Therefore, it is not surprising that children of this generation are facing bullying problems, which are more serious than normal child teasing. They are mocked, ridiculed, ignored by others, threatened, or even physically abused. These issues affect learning performance and a sense of security at school. In many cases, being bullied in childhood can cause negative effects on mental health through adulthood. As a result, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Rajanagarindra Institute (CAMRI), Department of Mental Health is collaborating with Thoresen Thai Agencies Public Company Limited (TTA Group) to develop an application called “BuddyThai” with the goals of helping children and youths who are bullied at school or through social media and hopefully relieving suicide rates among the children and youths in Thai society.

**Mr Chalermchai Mahagitsiri, Managing Director and CEO of TTA**, says, “Currently, bullying among children and youths is an important problem that is being overlooked, and no one has formed an active campaign to solve this problem. Bullying is not just a matter of physical injury. It can cause deeply-rooted mental problems among the bullied. For many years, various bullying situations have appeared to be increasing. More news keeps



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being spread about children's and youths' stress, depression, and suicide, even though children and youths in this era are talented and highly capable. The question is how to help these bullied children and youths gain strong minds and skills so they can live happily with other people. We want them to always have a counselling buddy who is a reliable and helpful psychological specialist. Therefore, TTA Group is collaborating with the Department of Mental Health to develop the BuddyThai Application, which is specifically designed to help bullied children and youths. The BuddyThai Application is not only helpful for enhancing mental immunity, but also gives schools, teachers, parents, and psychologists the chance to monitor and immediately help children and youths who have problems and severe effects on their mental health. We receive support from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to use a pilot area in schools affiliated with the BMA. This application will undergo continuous development to solve this problem, and we hope that BuddyThai will receive attention and be used widely in BMA schools as well as other schools throughout the country. Bullied children and youths can rely on BuddyThai.”

**Dr Dusit Likkhanaphichitkun, an expert from the Department of Mental Health,** reveals that “Bullying is any form of aggression by speech or behaviour that is intended to hurt others, whether physically or mentally, and causes the victims to be scared or suffer in daily life. In 2020, it was reported that Thailand was 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world rank after Japan and that most bullying was found through texts on social media. Therefore, surveillance and monitoring of this problem is one important way to reduce bullying problems at school and through social media. Very often, students are reluctant to tell or consult with friends, teachers or parents because they feel they are being watched by those bullying them. Therefore, problem-solving is delayed. Some youths are stressed, depressed, and helpless. The BuddyThai Application can be a channel to get help for these victims and record their emotional status. It is also a way for mental health specialists to actively help children in need, leading to a reduction of bullying problems and future effects.”



The BuddyThai Application has features and functions specifically designed to serve as an advisor for children and youths with 3 distinctions as follows.

1. A button is available to directly request counselling with a psychologist. When pressing this button, a child or youth can contact the 1323 Hotline of the Department of Mental Health. Alternatively, the child or youth can choose to chat via Facebook with a psychologist from the Department of Mental Health, a psychologist and a volunteer at LoveCare Station of Path2Health Foundation, or the BuddyThai App on Facebook.
2. There is a self-assessment in Emotional Quotient (EQ), and knowledge packages with exercises in life skills for children and youths to learn how to cope with life situations when being bullied. Good suggestions from reliable psychologists are also given.
3. There is a record system for daily emotions. Children and youths can record their own emotions every day, several times a day. They can record their emotions and reasons. The data of emotions are recorded and presented in weekly and monthly statistics. Children and youths can check the tendency of their previous emotions and the reasons for them. Emotional management techniques are also available for self-study. If any child or youth continuously records his or her stress or depression for a week with any indications to commit suicide, the admin team will monitor them closely. The team may notify schools, teachers, or hotline psychologists about the issue for active contact.

The BuddyThai Application is supported by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Mr Chadchart Sittipunt gave us the honour of presiding over the opening ceremony and permitted us to pilot the application in the schools affiliated with the BMA. The application was downloaded and users shared their experience with the application development team for further planning and improvement.



In a press release, the BuddyThai Application was officially launched among artists and celebrities with the goal of calling for an end to bullying. Some of these celebrities were Kornkan Suthikoset, Pijika Chittaputta, artists from CCG ARTISTS such as Vasu Jongjarukwin, Pattriya Payom, Thanapong Preechamongmit, Pannawit Sripong-Akara, Kittirat Kanjanabaworn, and Pongphan Chubchon, as well as actors from the series “Fah Lan Rak”.

#### About TTA

Thoresen Thai Agencies Public Company Limited, or TTA, is a strategic investment holding company that is listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand, with an investment policy to achieve growth through a balanced portfolio that is diversified both locally and internationally. Included in its current business portfolio are shipping, offshore service, agrochemical, food & beverage and investment.

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