

INSTITUTIONALIZED INCAPACITIES AND PRACTICE IN FLOOD DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND

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This paper focuses on the institutional capacity within the Thai nation-state to manage floods and the risks of flood-related disasters. The research aims to understand how various laws, policies, programs and procedures for managing floods and the risks of flood-related disaster came about and how they have performed. It further examines the capacity to mobilize and coordinate resources as well as deliberate, negotiate, monitor and evaluate the formal institutions from the national to local level.

Focusing the analysis on institutional changes and river-based flood events during the last two decades, the paper explores ways of reducing the risks of flood disasters in ways that do not further disadvantage already socially vulnerable groups. Documents and reports were reviewed. In addition, interviews and field observations on site after flood events were carried out.

There are indications of improved institutional performance of the government in the areas of relief and emergency, the formation of the flood disaster emergency committee at the outset of the monsoon season in flood prone areas, and initial efforts to involve communities in flood prevention and mitigation. Several institutionalized incapacities, however, continue to undermine the provision of assistance and services that would reduce the risk of flood disaster. Poor coordination across administrative bodies and line agencies results in fragmented flood mitigation and prevention intervention measures. Flood disaster victims are left alone to fend themselves especially in remote areas due to incomplete implementation, poor follow up, and structural biases. Many problems are aggravated by the absence of monitoring and evaluation of state agency's performance. Social mobilization on flood management may be necessary to re-enable these institutions to perform the roles in society for which they were intended – reducing vulnerabilities and risks of flood disasters.
