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Key success factors of disaster management policy: A case study of the Asian cities climate change resilience network in Hat Yai city, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to study the key success factors of public policy in disaster management in Songkhla province, based on a case study of the Hat Yai Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) in order to propose guidelines for sustainable disaster management in the area. The methodologies applied in this research were both quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative approach, the researcher used a questionnaire with 400 samples from three representative communities in Hat Yai city. The qualitative approach used the focus group technique with the stakeholders of policy implementation. The results of the survey regarding the problems within some communities affected by flooding indicated that most of the respondents had faced flooding in their community. Moreover, these respondents had participated in the policy and were aware of information about ACCCRN from different media, as well as having participated disaster management activities and had meetings with the organizations or personnel involved with disaster management. Moreover, the results showed a relationship between the individual factors and the information awareness of ACCCRN at the 95% confidence level. Additionally, the results using the qualitative method showed that the model of disaster management in Hat Yai, Songkhla province, involved three key success factors of disaster management policy: (1) there is a balance between self-interest and the public interest; (2) private participation is required; (3) addressing obstacles to policy implementation and its effective implementation. The benefits from this research are enormous in terms of successfully implementing disaster management policy and this policy can be applied to other contexts in Thailand as well.

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Introduction

The adverse impacts of environmental changes are now evident through the greenhouse effect, the increase in the

world temperature, and the rising sea level—just to mention a few examples. All these changes can lead to greater consequences or even disasters with global impacts causing great concern for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) ([Environmental Research and Training Center, 2013](#)). Recently, these impacts and disasters have been occurring more frequently with far more serious impacts.

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Floods are a major disaster in Hat Yai city, which is one of the cities most severely affected by flooding in Thailand. [Wongwisetsomjai \(2011\)](#) reported that during severe flooding in Hat Yai in November 1988, water rose 1.43 m and the flood-affected area was reported to have covered 20 km² with an estimated financial loss of more than THB 1,000 million. In the November 2000 flooding, the affected area in Hat Yai covered 3,300 km². Water from the Klong U-Tapao canal reportedly spread over 2,400 km², with estimated financial and economic losses of THB 17,000 million. In November, 2010, flooding again affected Klong U-Tapao and 80 percent of Hat Yai city area, with some 30,000 families affected, and more than THB 10,000 million in economic losses incurred.

From these flooding experiences, preparations to protect the people from the harsh impacts of such disasters have not been effective. Hence, it was only during the 2010 flooding that cooperation in disaster management started, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. The Foundation supported the creation of the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network project (ACCCRN), a participatory community planning project. ACCCRN's main objective is to develop the potential and readiness of the people in disaster areas to enable them to come up with strategic and tactical plans to cope with the impacts of climate change by working as a network and cooperating with associates at the local level. The implementation process of the project to cope with flooding in Hat Yai was based on legislation integrating management of the government sector, civil society, and communities which was recognized with a Thailand Public Service Award in 2012.

However, the integration policy employed a top-down approach, which had some limitations in terms of knowledge among the sectors involved, especially local people, who have been directly affected by the flood. The significant factor that contributed to sustainable disaster management was the media, which has created public awareness through continuous dissemination of disaster-related problems and information, and has facilitated network creation and cooperation among the government, private and public sectors. As a consequence, recognizing those limitations, the researchers' interest was aroused to study the problem systematically to create a body of knowledge that could be applied to other areas encountering similar problems. The case study of Hat Yai ACCCRN, could be an ideal model for the analysis of public policy in disaster management. The study could also benefit flood-prone areas and the people involved if an ACCCRN guideline model for disaster management that incorporates social and economic dimensions of the external environment could be prepared the network works basically in a cooperative manner to solve the flood problem and to learn actively together. The effects of the disaster on the community were assessed so that the community could be able to cope with and learn to adapt to the impacts of such disasters. The foundation of this study combined public policy with social processes to create "community power," which is seen as a tangible and sustainable economic security system. Furthermore, the community's involvement through the experiences and lessons learned from handling community problems and the development of guidelines to

implement public environmental policy are viewed as the network's major contributions to public policy sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were: (1) to survey the opinions of the citizens affected by flooding in Hat Yai on the involvement of ACCCRN in disaster management, as well as to identify their level of understanding and awareness of the role and activities of ACCCRN; and (2) to study the key success factors of disaster management policy in Hat Yai by analyzing and applying the case study of the Hat Yai ACCCRN.

Literature Review

Public Policy and Policy Implementation Concept

Public policy needs to have an objective that not only responds to people's needs but also aims for the betterment of the entire country. This requires systematic planning, guidance, and legislation to encourage the continuous implementation of activities until general guidelines of best practice can be drawn ([Thamrongwong, 2007](#)). A well-developed policy requires a competent policy maker, a good leader with a good understanding of the know-how of policy implementation, effective management ([Somporn, 1993](#) as cited by [Chusuk, 2010](#)), and attitudes of the stakeholders being taken into consideration ([Rodprasert, 1996](#)). Additionally, public policy provides broad guidelines on proper decision making management ([Siriwan, 1996](#)).

The study of [Daniel and Sabatier \(1989\)](#) found that to successfully implement a policy, the following conditions must be met: (1) there must be a precise relationship between cause and result; (2) policy must be clear; (3) there must be a real intention from the government to support it; (4) there must be organizational support; and (5) external environments must not have conflicts with the policy. If these conditions are absent in the policy implementation process, conflicts and obstacles are likely to occur which could cause implementation failure.

Based on the policy evaluation concept of [Anderson \(1994\)](#), policy implementation success is achieved when the results obtained from the comparison between expectation and results throughout the implementation process meet implementation objectives. On the other hand, [Dunn's \(2004\)](#) of success placed more emphasis on the change in society where policy was implemented. Its focus was more on the problems solved and the responsiveness of the society, stressing the implementation results more.

[Fitzpatrick, Sander, and Worthen \(2010\)](#) expressed the idea that human society had choices, and the best choices for humans require self-learning in choosing any activities that are evaluated as the best ones. Moreover, [House and Howe \(2000\)](#) discussed the idea of policy evaluation as the activity which created the understanding and accepting of policy; which was not something that forced people to believe but emphasized the results after the policy was implemented and people accepted its results.

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