



Preparing a Climate Change Research Strategy for Thailand

The great flood of 2011 clearly demonstrated Thailand’s vulnerability to the economic and social disruptions that can be caused by climate change.



The Climate Change Research Strategy for Thailand will be prepared in partnership with the USAID ADAPT Asia-Pacific Project*, the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, the National Research Council of Thailand and the Royal Institute.

Background

Major flooding occurred in Thailand in 2011 affecting central provinces and Bangkok. The effects of climate change are likely to bring similar devastation and disruption to Thailand in the future.

It is anticipated that flooding on this scale is likely to reoccur, which will bring considerable challenges for key development sectors, such as tourism, industry, and agriculture. Coastal areas, watersheds, and other ecosystems essential to the well-being of Thai people are likely to be greatly affected.

Thailand can and will adapt to these changes. However, great uncertainty exists over exactly how, when and where Thailand will be affected, and the options which may be available to achieve both climate resilience and low carbon development. This uncertainty must be addressed on a number of fronts. A coordinated, participatory, and closely monitored climate change research strategy can help generate knowledge for use by national decision makers – and Thai citizens. This will help to achieve better climate change planning and support effective program design and implementation.

Climate change research in Thailand

The Government of Thailand currently provides approximately Bht 1,000 million annually for research initiatives, a significant proportion of which is allocated to climate change-related research.

Research on climate change is also supported by other funders, both domestic and international. There is a growing research community interested in these issues. Given this significant budgetary commitment, the Government of Thailand wishes to develop an overall strategic vision of how this research can most effectively contribute to sustainable national development.

Unfortunately, the policy relevance and effectiveness of current research is not always clear. There is a growing understanding that climate change research needs strategic planning and coordination, with careful monitoring and assessment. Moreover, such a strategic approach can help the country improve access to international climate change finance by improving the quality of proposals submitted to international funding institutions.





USAID ADAPT Asia-Pacific Project and Partners

The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), together with the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) and the Royal Institute (RI), have requested assistance from the USAID ADAPT Asia-Pacific Project* to formulate a strategic plan that will identify, support, monitor and assess a national program of climate change research in Thailand. The proposed work will identify critical gaps in climate change research and help ensure that funding goes to research which helps fill these gaps. Plans are to be developed for regular monitoring and evaluation of the national climate change research agenda. This will ensure that the scientific foundation for future climate change projects remains strong, whilst reflecting both the needs of the Thai people and international norms. Ultimately, the proposed work will support Thailand in preparing high quality climate change programs, projects and policies, and strengthen the country's ability to access international climate change financing for their implementation.

Approach and Outputs

The Climate Change Research Strategy for Thailand will be prepared through the review of past and existing research on climate change and related fields, both in Thailand and internationally. The strategy will include an extensive program of consultations with both researchers and knowledge users. This will ensure a clear relationship between the need for new understanding and the climate change research that is commissioned in the future. The strategy will be a coherent, accessible document that identifies priorities for future climate change research.

*Funded through USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA) and implemented by AECOM, the USAID ADAPT Asia-Pacific Project is designed to share information and best practices about climate change adaptation finance modalities and project preparation tools and help governments build capacity to access the existing pool of international climate change adaptation funds.

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It will be comprehensive in scope, covering both mitigation and adaptation.

However, it is anticipated that emphasis will be given to adaptation because this is the area where the need for new knowledge and policy direction is greatest in Thailand. The strategy will cover research funded by the Government of Thailand and research that is resourced through other means. It will pay attention to the potential of regional and international collaboration on climate change research.

A program structure is proposed, with self-contained research programs (groups of projects clustered around a common theme). This structure is being proposed because individual programs can have their own budgets, timeframes and internal synergies. The various programs can be administered by different organizations and have their own governance structure and expert review process. Individual programs can also be aligned with broader research processes in fields such as agricultural research and with policy processes. This will ensure a far more effective use of research results and policy relevance.

The project will also explore the scope for establishing a Centre for Climate Change Research with a mandate that could cover some or all of the following issues: (i) research monitoring and evaluation; (ii) communications and raising public awareness through syntheses of climate change research; (iii) capacity-building in the Thai research community.