

# Identifying effective flood risk management at International Flood Forum

## Interest Story

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**BANGKOK, Thailand** – At the end of July, the International Flood Forum in Bangkok brought together national and international experts from different countries to share their experiences on effective flood risk management. Hosted by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), the forum was attended by representatives from the Royal Thai Government Agencies as well as from Australia, Japan, Lao PDR, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, USA, and Vietnam.

“The objective of this forum is to share the experiences on integrated flood risk management and flood recovery. We also want to encourage and capacitate future knowledge transfer and networking”, stated Deputy Executive Director N.M.S.I Arambepola from ADPC in his opening address.

The International Flood Forum is one of the activities under the Program for Reduction of Vulnerability to Floods in Thailand supported by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance of United States Agency for International Development (USAID/OFDA). The program aims at building up and enhancing the institutional and human capacity of

the agencies related to flood risk management in Thailand.

The forum started with a review of Thailand’s flood management policy and the current stage of implementation after the devastating floods of 2011.

“From the 2011 flooding we learned that the management of the upper, middle, and lower basins has to be carried out by a single command authority instead of many organizations. We now have better early warning systems than in 2011 and the public is more aware of how to act in case of a flooding. More importantly, public participation is essential in all activities. In addition, laws and regulations concerning with public land encroachment, especially waterway must be updated and strictly enforced”, stated Deputy Secretary General Ms. Ladawan Kumpa from the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board in Thailand.



Deputy Secretary General Ms. Ladawan Kumpa from the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board in Thailand held a presentation on Thailand’s flood management policy.



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# Predicting becoming harder due to climate change

During the forum, participants were presented with flood management experiences and lessons learned from around the world. It was agreed on that flood preparedness is becoming increasingly important due to accelerating climate change. At the same time, predictions of flooding are becoming harder to conduct because of the lack of relevant historical data.

Mr. Mark Ryan, Principal program officer on disaster management operational systems assessment at Emergency Management Queensland in Australia presented some of the lessons learned from the disastrous floods in Queensland in 2010 and 2011.

“Every local government susceptible to flooding should ensure that its local disaster management plan addresses local risks and circumstances, and that the plan can be easily used in the event of a disaster. Before the next wet season, we also need to identify communities that may require specific disaster management arrangements for example due to distance or potential isolation by disaster”, Mr. Ryan stated.



Principal program officer Mr. Mark Ryan from Emergency Management Queensland in Australia stressed the role of community engagement programs as well as the use of a range of different warning mechanisms, including those that do not rely on electricity.

## Land-use planning crucial in managing flood related risks

Professor emeritus Dr. Charng Ning Chen from the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, showcased an integrated approach to flood risk management in urban catchments.

“The flood risk in urban areas is strongly associated with land-use planning. Urban growth drives the economy but being unplanned the growth also tends to increase the flood risk. Balancing between the pressure for development and the preservation of resources is very complicated”, Dr. Chen said.

He cited, as an example, the problems related to the use of ground water and the encroachment of floodplain in urban areas.



Professor emeritus Dr. Charng Ning Chen from the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore discussing urban flood risk management with other experts.

“ Using ground water causes subsidence, and the lower the land is the more prone it is to flooding. If cities keep on using ground water, the pace of subsidence will be very fast. These cities would need to find alternative sources of water supply even though the alternatives might be costly. Similarly problems are associated with floodplain encroachment in urban streams. Fortunately people are more and more aware of the flooding impacts and are keen to tackle them, ”

says Professor emeritus Dr. Charng Ning Chen from the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.