

ACCCRN Thailand Organizes the 1st National – Local Stakeholders Consultation for Policy Dialogues

ACCCRN Thailand organized the 1st of a series of national-local stakeholder consultation sessions to engage in policy dialogues on urbanization and climate change in Thailand. The session, which was held on 2nd May 2013 at the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), was attended by a number of national and local level government and non-government officials. Amongst the participants were Directors from the Department of Water Resources, Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning, Public Works and Country Planning, Mayors of Udonthani City and Thungsong Municipality, the city clerk of Chiang Rai city Municipality, the Deputy Mayor of Khon Kaen City Municipality, the Director of the Sanitary Department of the Bureau of Public Works of Hat Yai City Municipality, and Officers from the Phuket Provincial Office. A representative from the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET), a key partner of ACCCRN Thailand, was also present at the consultation meeting. The main objective of the consultation meeting was to provide a platform for effective engagement on discussions around urbanization and climate change in Thailand. The expected outcomes of the meeting were to possibly influence reforms in current policies and planning approaches related to urbanization and climate change. The meeting also gave ACCCRN Thailand the opportunity to build on its networks with national and local level stakeholders.

The session commenced with a few opening words by Dr. Qwanruedee Chotichanathawewong, President of the Thailand Environment Institute; which was followed up by a presentation by Dr. Pakamas Thinphanga, Project Manager of ACCCRN Thailand, who gave a brief overview of the urbanization and climate change scenario in Thailand. Dr. Pakamas touched upon various aspects in her presentation that raised concerns about urban climate change resilience efforts in Thailand, the need for national support in local level climate change adaptation initiatives, and the need for policy reforms that would support local level efforts. Drawing upon experiences from implementation efforts in the two ACCCRN cities in Thailand (Chiang Rai and Hat Yai), Dr. Pakamas explained the level of achievements at the local level, and the potentiality of scaling up these efforts to the national level. Following the preliminary presentation, the session was opened up to all participants for discussion. The discussion was based around finding prospective solutions to a number of issues; such as the improvement and capacity development of Thailand's institutional mechanisms for effective climate change policy implementation, the integration of climate change into development policies and plans, the implementation of integrated policies at the national level, and the potential for scaling up local level efforts. National and local level officials conversed on this most important issue for Thailand, a country that is facing major threats from natural hazards such as floods and droughts. The following were some pressing issues which both national and local stakeholders felt needed greater focus –

- The need for stronger coordination between national and local stakeholders, to allow for joint planning and implementation.
- The need for a leading coordinating national entity that would be responsible for directing and managing efforts for putting climate change integrated development policies into action.
- The need for transparent processes that facilitate the sharing of relevant data and information on climate change, water resource management and urban development.

The national-local stakeholder's consultation is the 1st out of a series of policy dialogues that are aimed at mediating important discussions on integrating climate change into mainstream development policies and processes. The next consultation dialogue will focus on priority issues identified in the 1st dialogue.

