

# How local governments engage communities in climate change adaptation

Louis Lebel<sup>a,\*</sup>, Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa<sup>b</sup>, Ornuma Poplanich<sup>b</sup>, Phimpakan Lebel<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Unit for Social and Environmental Research, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand*

<sup>b</sup> *Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok, Thailand*

---

## ARTICLE INFO

### *History:*

Draft: 14 Feb 2014

Full draft, in prep.

### *Keywords:*

Climate change  
Adaptation  
Local government  
Communities  
Public participation  
Stakeholder engagement  
barriers

## ABSTRACT

Collaboration between local governments and communities is potentially of great importance to the effectiveness and sustainability of local adaptation. This paper seeks to understand how local governments engage communities and the capacities and contextual factors which influence those relationships. It is based on a review of 47 case studies from the Asia Pacific region. This review finds that governments have engaged communities with varying levels of inclusiveness and legitimacy. Local governments may engage residents as a source of free-labor and off-load burdens and responsibilities, or more positively, as partners in action and learning-by-doing. They also neglect communities. The review also shows that engagement is influenced by capacities of local government and a set of contextual dimensions which include institutional setting, political and financial incentives, level of public awareness and the influence of third parties. Local governments can learn from this experience about when and how to better engage communities in adaptation activities.

---

\* Corresponding author

E-mail address: [louis@sea-user.org](mailto:louis@sea-user.org) or [llebel@loxinfo.co.th](mailto:llebel@loxinfo.co.th) (L. Lebel).