

Measuring Organizational Resiliency for Flood Response in Thailand

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Abstract : The objective of this research is to measure organizational resiliency through five attributes namely, rapidity, redundancy, resourcefulness, and robustness and to provide recommendations for resiliency building in flood risk communities. The research was conducted in Thailand following the severe floods of 2011 triggered by Tropical Storm Nock-ten. The floods lasted over eight months starting in June 2011 affecting 65 of the country's 76 provinces and over 12 million people. Funding from a US National Science Foundation grant was used to collect ephemeral data in rural (Ayutthaya), suburban (Pathum Thani), and urban (Bangkok) provinces of Thailand. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted in Thai with 44 contacts from public, private, and non-profit organizations including universities, schools, automobile companies, vendors, tourist agencies, monks from temples, faith based organizations, and government agencies. Multiple triangulations were used to analyze the data by identifying selective themes from the qualitative data, validated with quantitative data and news media reports. This helped to obtain a more comprehensive view of how organizations in different geographic settings varied in their understanding of what enhanced or hindered their resilience and consequently their speed and capacities to respond. The findings suggest that the urban province of Bangkok scored highest in resourcefulness, rapidity of response, robustness, and ability to rebound. This is not surprising considering that it is the country's capital and the seat of government, economic, military and tourism sectors. However, contrary to expectations all 44 respondents noted that the rural province of Ayutthaya was the fastest to recover amongst the three. Its organizations scored high on redundancy and rapidity of response due to the strength of social networks, a flood disaster sub-culture due to annual flooding, and the help provided by monks from and faith based organizations. Organizations in the suburban community of Pathum Thani scored lowest on rapidity of response and resourcefulness due to limited and ambiguous warnings, lack of prior flood experience and controversies that government flood protection works like sandbagging favored the capital city of Bangkok over them. Such a micro-level examination of organizational resilience in rural, suburban and urban areas in a country through mixed methods studies has its merits in getting a nuanced understanding of the importance of disaster subcultures and religious norms for resilience. This can help refocus attention on the strengths of social networks and social capital, for flood mitigation.

Keywords : disaster subculture, flood response, organizational resilience, Thailand floods, religious beliefs and response, social capital and disasters

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