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WIPANU KONGJUN: A STUDY OF PROBLEM SOLVING POTENTIAL AT COMMUNITY LEVEL: A CASE OF DROUGHT PROBLEM IN SEURKOK, WAPEEPHATHUM, MAHASARAKARM PROVINCE. THESIS ADVISER: ANUCHAT POUNGSOMLEE, Ph.D., SOLOT SIRISAI, M.A., POLDEJ PINPRATEEP, M.D. 154 p. ISBN 974-664-888-8

This qualitative study looked in the process in which people of Seurkok community, in Wapeephathum, Maharakarm province, solved the drought problem in order to make a case study to investigate the potential and the strengths of a community participation in problem solving. The study looked into historical developments of the problem solving patterns. Conditional factors associated with these patterns, and how they were affected by the changes in the condition of social, economic, political and natural resources were investigated. The data were collected from secondary data, arranged public forums, as well as in-depth interviews and observations of the involvement in public activities of the community members.

The study found that the patterns of drought management in Seurkok can be grouped into 4 categories: 1) immediate problem solving patterns, 2) traditional patterns, 3) patterns based on cooperation and self-reliance within the community, and 4) patterns involving the government or outside organizations. By studying the processes and outcomes of these problem solving patterns, it was found that there were conditional factors, contributing to both the strength and weaknesses of the potential in problem solving at community level. These conditional factors involve : 1) inefficiency in utilizing civic communication infrastructure, 2) lack of debating skills in order to reach public decisions, 3) important roles played by community leaders in stimulating and initiating public engagement, 4) changes in people's way of thinking regarding importance of self-reliance within the community, and less dependence on outside help, 5) importance of community institutions, such as temples and schools, as a center to coordinate public engagement, and 6) importance of sense of community in realizing public cooperation.