

National Joint Strategic Plan on Community Health System

1. A strong community is very important for sustainable development.

Nowadays, it's acknowledged that local communities are important because they're the foundation of the whole of society. Only a strong foundation will be able to bear a huge building. Country development, with top-down administration, and focused mainly on economic growth for the past 50 years, not only overlooked local communities but gradually destroyed these foundations until it became a crisis for the whole of society, including social aspects, the environment, health, economy, and politics ^[1,2].

The article 66, 67, 80 (2), 87(1) of the 2007 Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand and the 2009 Statute on the National Health system have given priority to communities in the aspects of community rights, participation in local development policy, strong community and strong health management sub-districts. Even government policy has also given priority to communities as shown in the policy of people's health development, which focuses on participation of the public sector and used 'good management', 'sustainability', etc., as indicators of success. ^[3,4].

2. Many organizations support for healthy community or strong community but they have not been integrated yet

At present, many agencies and organizations from both government and private sectors including civil society and local administrations have given priority to supporting community development regarding health, economy, social aspects, the environment and others ^[5]. From a primary review, the Subcommittee of the National Joint Strategic Planning on Community Health System, under the organizing committee of National Health Assembly 2013, has found that there are at least forty-six institutes and organizations which are playing a role as supporters on healthy or strong communities in various methods and patterns; for example,

2.1. **Policy agencies** are: (1) National Health Commission Office, (2) Ministry of Public Health, (3) Ministry of Interior, (4) Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, (5) Ministry of Agriculture and

Cooperatives, (6) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, (7) Office of the National Economic and Social Advisory Council, (8) Ministry of Energy, (9) Ministry of Culture, and (10) Ministry of Justice.

2.2. **Technical Support Agencies** are the: (1) Office of Thai Healthy Lifestyle Strategic Plan, (2) Department of Disease Control, (3) Department of Health, (4) Department of Mental Health, (5) Department for Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, (6) Food and Drug Administration, (7) Foundation of Community Health System Research and Development Institute, (8) Society and Health Institute, (9) Health Systems Research Institute, (10) Thai Holistic Health Foundation, (11) National Health Foundation. (12) The Thailand Research Fund, (13) Department of Local Administration, (14) Local Development Institute, (15) Learning Institute for Everyone (Life University), (16) Office of the National Commission on Social Welfare Promotion, (17) Office of the Narcotics Control Board, and (18) Office of the Energy Regulatory Commission.

2.3. **Operational Agencies** are the: (1) Department of Health Service Support, (2) National Health Security Office, (3) Office of Thai Health Promotion Foundation, (4) Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, (5) Government Savings Bank, (6) Office of the Sufficiency Economy, Prime Minister's Office, (7) National Village and Urban Community Fund Office, (8) Office of the Thai Women Empowerment Fund, (9) Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), (10) 4 Regions Network of Self-Reliance Community Life Plan, (11) Community Development Department, (12) Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, (13) Green World Institute, Sustainable Energy Foundation, (14) Moral Promotion Center (Public Organization), (15) Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, (16) Office of the Political Development Council, (17) Office of the 84 Sufficiency Sub-districts (PTT), and (18) Siam Cement Foundation

Despite the fact that several institutes and organizations have given support for the community, cooperation was limited as it was found that they adhere to their own business and individual goals, and evaluated by different key performance indicators.

3. Strategy of pooling support for the community health system

By interviewing twenty experts, reviewing plans and strategies for supporting communities of the twenty allied organizations, exploring ten databases of tools and technologies, and brainstorming from related persons, the subcommittee concludes that 7 issues should be integrated: (1) main purpose, (2) principle of working together, (3) ownership and participation, (4) strategy driving plan, (5) multi-centric database, (6) database of tools/technology, (7) mechanism of organization.

4. Communities have been changed a lot, but allied organizations still stick to a basic approach regarding local communities.

Another major problem of supporting healthy and strong communities is that they need a non static model dynamic along with the movement of society while many organizations still strict to old patterns of work. This has resulted in lacking of a body of knowledge that can be used to create new ideas for supporting communities. Therefore, various strategies must be specified to cover three groups and seven types of communities, as follows:

a. Basic local communities which include:

1. Rural communities, villages or sub-districts which are traditional communities and the most common type of community in every part of the country.
2. Traditional urban community refers to crowded communities, slum communities, and shanty towns under local municipalities that are common and widespread.

b. Modern local communities, particularly in Bangkok and other big cities which include:

3. Housing estates, condominiums, apartments and flats
4. Factory communities
5. Office communities

c. Other kinds of communities which include:

6. Communities that appear real, i.e. cyber communities, or wave communities that superimpose on other communities.
7. Other specific communities such as ethnic communities, border communities, tribal communities, etc.

Nowadays, most of the allied organizations have been supporting only communities in category number 1 and 2. Other kinds of communities still need a strategy of development. Because of rapid changes in society, various methods of developing healthy and strong communities should be created for being used with these kinds of communities.

5. Community health system: Definition of operation

“Healthy community” and “strong community”, “Self-reliance community” and “happy community” are used interchangeably, which depends on the special interest or functions of allied organizations. For the same main goal in the future, it is important to define some words which cover the existing used terms and serve for all allied organizations.

1) Healthy community, strong community, self-reliance community, well-being community

This is a community that possesses competency in learning, adapting, and solving problems by themselves on economic, social, political, environmental, health, and moral aspects, until it becomes strong and healthy.

2) Supporting community health system job

This includes duties of promoting and supporting local communities, both rural and urban, as well as others, to call for participation from people in each community to solve their own problems until it becomes strong and healthy.

3) Community organization

This is a pattern of establishment of communities with structural and systemic self-management that can be different by objectives, interests, and interrelationships between them and other organizations regarding type, size and property.

6. Opportunity and crisis on the job of supporting the community health system.

At this time, social concept and policy for supporting community health and strong communities is a great opportunity to drive the development of the community health system. But this opportunity may not remain long because the political crisis in Thailand has been fluctuating all the time. The end of this opportunity is not predictable. On the other hand, the political conflict still remains because of fighting for power at the top level that induced people to call for the reform. Strong community was advised to be a part of this reform.

Additionally, there are some government policies of developing huge infrastructure that lack studies and evidence of adverse impacts and have no participation from local communities. These have become significant threats to local communities. Moreover, the populist policies of political parties are used to gain votes during an election may cause policy addiction and make communities weak in the long term.

In addition, entering the ASEAN community will present both opportunities and risks at the same time. Many sectors are concerned that local communities in Thailand are not well prepared in terms of quality when compared to some other ASEAN members.

7. Community health across the country is the ultimate goal. All kinds of community organizations are the co-factors.

Community organization is the concrete outcome and output of the attempt for supporting healthy or strong community that allied organizations work together under the same strategy. In general, the initial process is to promote people participation for solving problems together and develop their competencies in the learning process and in self-management until it gradually becomes strong.

From surveying and reviewing twenty allied organizations, huge databases that covered all community organizations in each area were available in very few organizations. Information in these databases can be used to reflect the strength of the foundations of these communities in the country.

Initially, 205,834 community organizations were shown in ten databases of the allied organizations, and 106,780 of these organizations were quality evaluated for strong community, resulting in different levels ranging from 13.7% to 56.2%.

8. Principle of Community Support

Now, there are some principles that the allied organizations understand well and commonly use for community support work. Then, they should be assembled and formally specified as 7 main principles, as follows:

- 1) Principle of community-based
- 2) Principle of outcome-based
- 3) Principle of knowledge exchange
- 4) Principle of decentralization and self-reliance
- 5) Principle of social fund development for strong communities in long term

- 6) Principle of inducing atmosphere which enhances interlinkage and cooperation among allied organizations
- 7) Principle of monitoring negative factors which obstructs a strong community development process

9. Strategic plan of allied organizations

For unity in supporting community health development, and for integrating various allied organizations, the Subcommittee of the National Strategic Plan Development on Healthy Community System has organized the process of drafting the strategic plan, and consists of: document research, interviews of experts, case synthesis, meetings for brainstorming and public hearings (about 500 participants from 46 allied organizations, 234 networks of the national health assembly, and others), vision, mission and goals are determined together as follows:

VISION:

“Thai society is broadly covered with strong, diverse and secure communities connecting together as networks. These communities are the foundation of the development of the country in all aspects: economy, society, politics, environment, health, morals and ethics, security and safety of life and assets, leading to a healthy community”

MISSION:

- 1) To coordinate every allied organization for supporting community development, both urban and rural, to possess the capability of self management and to be strong with quality under their own cultures and social capital.
- 2) To support and encourage communities to use data and information for decision making. Furthermore, communities should monitor any policy, leading to the long term weakness of community such as: 1) the mega project for developing infrastructures without public hearings, 2) investment projects resulting in destruction of natural resources and the environment, 3) inducing people to become addicted to populist policies or rely on social welfare. In addition, communities should move for policy change from completed social welfare to civil society welfare. All these activities aim to encourage people to be givers rather than to be takers.

- 3) To maintain the situation of supporting strong communities as long as possible.
- 4) To develop a body of knowledge, innovation and learning processes regarding strong communities at the network level and the whole of society.

GOALS:

- 1) To empower and strengthen communities in their learning capacity, adaptation and self management
- 2) To push the policy of promoting self management of the community.
- 3) To promote and maintain the atmosphere of supporting the development of the community health system.
- 4) To develop body of the knowledge and innovation appropriate to the changing world.

In addition, the strategic plan explains objectives and goals that are composed of four aspects, nine issues, thirteen indicators, nine driving strategies, and ten projects as well as managing mechanism in three levels: 1) mechanism of cooperation at the sub-district and municipality level; 2) mechanisms of support at the province or district level; 3) mechanisms of cooperation at the national level.

10. Commitment on driving strategy

For unity of the forty-six allied organizations in the driving strategic plan and program, this plan was submitted to the 6th National Health Assembly with asking for issuing this plan as declaration of the National Health Assembly which aims to be operated seriously and continuously to achieve goals within the next 5 to 10 years.

11. Issue for consideration by National Health Assembly

Request the National Health Assembly to consider documents of Health Assembly 6/resolution draft 1 the National Joint Strategic Plan on Community Health System.

References

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