

## **National Policy for Health System Development in Multi-Cultural Areas**

### **1. Present State of the Problem**

The crisis of violence inflicted by the southern unrest not only brought forth assaults, injuries, death, stress and fear but also created a lack of confidence in state agencies and caused the people to feel a strong sense of distrust among themselves. The crisis has created domestic and foreign impacts regarding economic, social, environmental and educational aspects.

In the southern border provinces, the “perception” relating to past ethnic and religious differences has once again been brought up and used as an environment or condition leading to violence, a situation which has intensified of late. The outcome is that culture and identity factors play a role in state performed discrimination, making many people in the southern border provinces feel that local political and administration processes are unjust. It also contributes to violence by providing justification for the use of force as repercussion to cultural and symbolic power losses where justice is sought after.

#### *1.1 Administration Structure Addressing the Issue*

The state of unrest in the three southern border provinces is partly resultant from attempts to create fear and suspicion, which may fuel more violence at a much broader scale uncontrollable by centralized state power. Employing centralized state policy and using ill-suited local administration organization structures are also cause factors for the inability to alleviate violence. Restructuring administration by integrating decentralization concepts is seen as a more suitable alternative for addressing this issue.

#### *1.2 State of the Problem and the Justice System*

In the southern border provinces, where the majority of the population are Muslim, there has been an inability to use Islamic law in conjunction with national law to decide cases, especially in family and inheritance cases where both the plaintiff and defendant are Muslim. Common issues relate to the fact that at courts of first instance, which are mostly Provincial or Juvenile and Family Courts, although a Justice Dato is assigned to the panel of judges hearing a case, the Justice Dato holds the authority to decide only issues pertaining to Islamic law while the true authority to decide evidential facts rests with the career judges. In this respect, the role of the Justice Dato is no different from the role of Islamic law advisor to the court justices. To apply Islamic law principles by providing the Justice Dato with full authority to decide cases and by establishing a Muslim family and inheritance justice process, there is a strong need to develop the Muslim family and inheritance justice system and press for

the establishment of a family and inheritance court in Thailand by setting up a Shari 'a court

### *1.3 Issues Relating to the Education System*

Education in the three southern provinces is deemed one of the most important keys to addressing the southern unrest. If the education provided is of poor quality, it affects the people's health and leads to unemployment, exploitation and lack of access to the judicial process. It ultimately causes people to fall prey to abusers.

There are Islam education centers (Tadika) in the three southern provinces located at mosques and providing instruction in basic religion for children and youth. These centers are run by the community and provide religious education for children in the village ,regardless of their age. In addition to studying Islam at school, the children also go to the Tadika or the mosque Islam education center for more lessons. The group of children attending government schools go to the Tadika school on weekends or Monday and Thursday evenings, outside of their regular class time.

With regard to weakness in the basic education system for youth in the three southern border provinces, it was found that in 2002, the population group aged 20-29 received an average 8.3 years of basic education while population in other southern provinces received 9.5 years and population in other parts of the country received 9 years of basic schooling. Only 2% of school age population in the three southern border provinces received tertiary education.

With regard to education quality, the results of a nation-wide achievement test conducted by the Ministry of Education showed that students from the three southern border provinces scored lower than students from other parts of the country in all subjects except English. Issues relating to achievement scores being below set criteria are found in the basic education stream and may be found only among Muslim students. This is due to the fact that most parents want their children to study Islam as well as to be taught basic subjects and some want their children to study only the religion. Consequently, the children are sent to Pondok schools and it is found that 2/3 of Muslim children in the three southern border provinces are sent to private schools teaching Islam where they study a total of 35 hours a week. State schools teach a total of 25 hours a week.

It is found that the quality of education in most private schools teaching Islam, which are set up according to Article 15(1) and Article 15(2), need to be improved urgently or are graded as fair in all quality indicators. In particular, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat schools receiving 60% and 40% subsidies and schools set up according to the provision in Article 15(2) are assessed as needing immediate improvement and fair in all quality indicators.

### ***Causes of Problems Relating to Education Provision***

#### *(1) Lack of Suitable Participation from Local Communities*

The government has stepped in to provide education for the local people without any true understanding about the cultural dimensions of the issue. There is a lack of suitable participation from local communities, causing the people to be less willing to accept and have trust in state provided education.

### *(2) Prejudice*

Some Muslims have the perception that the state uses education as a tool to engulf Melayu-Muslim culture while the state perceives that some Islam schools set up by communities, in particular Tadikas, Pondok and private schools teaching Islam, harbor separatist ideologies and support the use of violence. Youth attending these schools are also regarded as having the probability of being involved in acts of terrorism. This is one reason why Muslims in the three southern border provinces don't want to send their children to government schools.

### *(3) Lack of Qualified Education Personnel*

Basic problems relating to the shortage of qualified teachers are prevalent in all areas, especially in the 4 core subjects: Thai, English, Mathematics and Science. Seventy percent of the shortage lies in these four subjects. The state of unrest has pressured more than 1,500 highly experienced teachers, especially teachers who are Buddhists, to request transfer out from the area within the past three years, while newly hired teachers, who are employed in the status of government employees, have little teaching experience.

### *(4) Lack of Safety for Education Personnel*

Within the past three years, the issue of lack of safety for teachers and educational personnel has been a significant factor directly affecting education efficiency. More than 200 schools have been burnt or destroyed, over 300 teachers, personnel and students have been injured, while 100 have been killed<sup>1</sup>. These are factors causing fear among teachers, who dare not come to teach their classes as usual. Acts of violence cause schools in the vicinity to be closed for an average period of 30-40 days or 20% of the yearly school time, further adversely affecting the already poor quality level of education. Because students are not having enough time in class, a situation which directly affects learner academic achievement.

## *1.4 Issues Relating to the Economic System*

Despite an increased economic and social growth in the three Southern border provinces, the discrepancy of income distribution remains. Poverty incidence is still high. In 2007, 20.0% of the population in Narathiwat Province was poor, while Pattani Province registered 19.7% of the poor. This figure was four times as high as the poverty incidence in the overall Southern region which registered at 5.9% and three times as high as the poverty incidence of the nation which stood at 8.53%. People in the three Southern border provinces had no security in getting access to and using natural resources. The community which is close to these natural resources did not have the administrative power to manage the assets. Local people were deprived of their rights while those from the outside could make use of new technology or political power to take away the natural resources from them. The fact that the community had no power was another dimension that affected human security in the locality.

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<sup>1</sup> as of 15 July, 2007

### *1.5 Social, Traditional and Cultural Issues*

The encroachment of capitalist development and western culture brings with it the spread of drugs and vice, creating the biggest problem, especially among youth groups, and tearing down traditional local Islam beliefs. Accompanying this is the weakness of the family institution, starting from the preparation stage to the family formation stage and the rearing of off-springs in accordance with religious principles. The people's lack of local ownership perception and lack of participation in the conception of administration and development plan directions causes them to not feel a sense of commitment and a desire to protect the assets and interests of the country.

## **2. Strategic Framework and Guideline**

The Southern Border Province Administration Center has laid down its strategic framework and guideline in accordance with the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board's southern border province development strategy. The framework and guidance comprise 5 sections:

Strategy 1 *Providing Protection and Safety, Facilitating Justice to Enhance Confidence in State Power and Creating Resilience for Risk Groups*, which may be mainly implemented by:

- (1.1) integrating the economic and social development plan with the safety plan
- (1.2) promoting and developing the quality of justice in accordance with the rule of law
- (1.3) thoroughly and equitably providing assistance and redress for those affected by the rest
- (1.4) adapting target group beliefs and attitudes about terrorist movements
- (1.5) providing space and allowing all parties to participate
- (1.6) seriously, comprehensively and consistently preventing and addressing the drug issue

Strategy 2 *Addressing Poverty and Strengthening Vocational and Income Security, Creating Self-Reliance*, which may be mainly implemented by:

- (2.1) developing target groups' vocational, income security and livelihood security
- (2.2) supporting the strong community process to create learning and participation processes for community members through the formation of a community plan

Strategy 3 *Developing Human Quality to Create Employment Opportunity and Upgrade Life Quality*, which may be implemented by:

- (3.1) seriously driving education reform at all levels and throughout the entire system
- (3.2) developing the public health system to be sufficient and of standard quality and to provide equal access to services
- (3.3) strengthening the family institution and building capacity for people groups
- (3.4) encouraging the use of social capital, especially local culture
- (3.5) developing quality and standard labor skills needed by domestic and international labor markets

Strategy 4 *Strengthening Local Economic Base and Developing International Co-operation*, which may be mainly implemented by:

(4.1) expanding the agricultural production base to be more varied and to link with the processing industry and markets by increasing productivity, developing marketing systems and connecting with processing industries

(4.2) developing infrastructure to support development in agro-industry, trade and services

(4.3) developing co-operation with neighboring countries

(4.4) creating new opportunities for local economic development by opening channels to maritime transport, motivating new investments to the area

(4.5) establishing favorable relationships and understanding with other countries

Strategy 5 *Managing Special Development Zones*, which may be mainly implemented by:

(5.1) pressing for the improvement and drafting of specific regulations for the Special Southern Border Provinces Development Zone

(5.2) tasking the Southern Border Province Administration Center with integrating project plan development

### **3. Solution**

As stated in the Annex 1/1/3, “Preparation of Policy Proposal on National Policy for Health System Development in Multicultural Areas”, 5 main issues have been proposed to be considered - administrative structure, justice system, education, economy, and social and culture.

### **4. Action by the National Health Assembly**

The National Health Assembly is invited to consider the *Annex 1/1/3 and Draft Resolution 1/3*.