

Summary of the 2003 Year-end Conference on “Human Security”*

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The 2003 Year-end Conference on “Human Security” was considered timely for at least a couple of reasons. First, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security had been set up recently, so the concept of human security has now become more visible in Thailand, although it is still very new. It was thought that further clarification and discussion should be useful in making the concept more operational for public policy.

Second, at the international level, the Human Security Commission, co-chaired by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate, had earlier in the year finished two years of work in producing the Human Security Commission Report entitled “Human Security Now.” This report was published in May and is currently in the dissemination stage.

Format and Contents of the Conference

The Year-end Conference consisted of four parts. In the morning session of November 29, the Conference started with a panel discussion on “Human Security in the Thai Context.” This was followed by a presentation by representatives of the research team summarizing the various research papers distributed as background papers at the Conference.

In the afternoon session of the same day, the Conference was divided into group sessions under four main themes comprising seven separate groups. Finally, in the plenary session in the morning of November 30, representatives of the various groups reported on the main findings and recommendations from each group.

The group sessions were divided up as follows:

1. International Dimensions Affecting Human Security in Thailand

This session examined developments at the international and regional levels that are relevant to human security concerns in Thailand. Four papers were presented covering transnational crimes, human trafficking, illicit drugs, and illegal migrants.

2. Social Environment and Human Security

This topic was divided into two group sessions as follows:

2.1 Social Aspects of Human Security

This group covered various social aspects related to human security; three papers were presented covering political and electoral processes, education, and housing.

2.2 Increasing Human Security at the Grass-roots

This group focused on increasing human security in local communities; three papers were presented covering human rights, community contentment, and social capital.

3. Increasing Economic Security

This topic was divided into three groups as follows:

3.1 The Economic System and Human Security

This group focused on features of the economic system that will enhance economic security; four papers were presented covering the economic system, social protection mechanisms, the underground economy, and poverty reduction.

* The Conference was co-organized by the Chai Pattana Foundation, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Community Organizations Development Institute, the Health System Research Institute, and the Thailand Development Research Institute, during November 29-30, 2003 at the Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel, Chon Buri.

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3.2 Increasing Economic Security at the Grass-roots Level

This group focused on how to increase economic security at the level of local communities; the role of the state, local communities, and agencies that provide coordination between the state and the local communities was discussed.

3.3 The Role of the Business Sector and State Enterprises in Supporting Community Security

This group focused on how businesses and state enterprises can compliment the role of the state in contributing to better human security at the local level. The experiences of various organizations were presented.

4. Health Security

This group focused on various aspects related to increasing health security. Four papers were presented covering road safety, drug addiction, the 30-baht health care project, and environmental contamination.

Participants

The Conference was attended by approximately 600 participants from the political and public sectors, the private sector, academia and representatives of the general public.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The results of the group discussions were presented at the plenary session, which was chaired by Mr. Chakramon Phasukavanich, Secretary-General of the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. The group discussions covered seven topics as follows:

1. International Dimensions Affecting Human Security in Thailand
2. Social Environment and Human Security
 - 2.1 Social Aspects of Human Security
 - 2.2 Increasing Human Security at the Grass-roots
3. Increasing Economic Security
 - 3.1 Economic System and Human Security
 - 3.2 Increasing Economic Security at the Grass-roots Level
 - 3.3 The Role of the Business Sector and State Enterprises in Supporting Community Security
4. Health Security



The results of the group discussions are as follows.

GROUP 1: International Dimensions Affecting Human Security in Thailand

The discussion covered four issues, namely, (a) transnational crime and threats to human security; (b) measures to cope with the trafficking of women and children; (c) illicit drugs and human security; and (d) migrant workers and human security. The group defined the dimensions of human security as covering human rights, protection, and empowerment. The group also maintained that the scope of human security should cover everyone, not only the Thai people; it considered the migrant workers issue as a matter of people on the move.

On the issue of transnational crime and threats to human security, the group noted that human security in Thailand is complicated and there is a close link between internal factors and international factors, that is, Thailand's problem of insecurity could become a security problem of the region or of the world. On the contrary, the security problems of neighboring countries or the region could become Thailand's problems. The group also noted that an appropriate approach to fighting against terrorism, to achieve a balance between state security and people's security, required a clear understanding of the concept of human security, due consideration of human rights, and people's participation in policy-making and cooperation at various levels.

Trafficking of women and children is a transnational problem. As such, Thailand cannot solve the problem alone. Although women and children providing illicit sexual services are acting illegally, they are the victims or outcome of the trafficking process. Therefore, they need to be rescued, and their cooperation should be sought in the fight against trafficking. In other

words, the solution to the problem of trafficking should

be aimed at the traffickers not the victims. Otherwise prosecuting the victims would be actually victimizing and stigmatizing them.

The issue of illicit drugs is an international problem that is detrimental to the human security of the Thai people. The solution to the problem requires the cooperation of many countries. Although the serious suppression of illicit drugs has a positive impact on human security, an inappropriate approach to suppression (such as extra-judicial killing) can also have an adverse impact.

In 2002, the number of migrant workers in Thailand was about 1.2 million. Notably, migrant workers are now spreading all over Thailand, with concentrations in border areas and major provinces. Migrant workers are demand-driven. Labor-intensive industries, not being able to increase productivity, opt to reduce the costs of production by hiring low-wage migrant workers. The group maintained that migrant workers should be treated on an equal basis with Thai workers, and migrant workers should be registered.

The discussion also touched upon policy issues such as the trap of treating people as either friends and foes, vicious circle, the fear of the victims of crime to come forward in seeking justice, democratic style justice, perception gaps, the culture of power abuse, etc. Recommendations for such policy issues included a paradigm shift to treat human security as a transnational problem; strengthening the problem-solving of the state, the private sector, and civil society; breaking the aforementioned trap; and transnational justice.

2. Social Environment and Human Security

GROUP 2.1: Social Aspects of Human Security

Three aspects of social human security were focused upon: election/politics, education, and housing and community development (for low-income groups).

Elections are a process of people empowerment. Good politicians lead to good policy, good policy leads to better living, and better living leads to human security. Thus, the holding of fair and free elections is imperative for human security. The group considered that good elections result from good education, particularly civic education: both formal education and continuing education. The group emphasized that democracy under the representative system of government needs a system of close monitoring. Key factors in this regard are: first, the candidate; second, the voters; third, NGOs; and fourth, the electoral referees.

Education contributes to human security in many ways. First, education increases people's literacy and mathematical literacy; second, education increases job opportunities; third, education increases understanding of one's rights and reduces the chance of a person being exploited; fourth, education strengthens the right to vote and the voice of the disadvantaged; and fifth, education strengthens women's capacity to obtain decent employment and to participate in the decision-making

process both within and outside the family. Accordingly, the group called for the following measures: increase the quality of basic education; encourage the participation of the local community in education administration; develop local practices into community learning and education; encourage cooperation among the parties concerned, particularly, schools, homes, places of worship, and communities; promote fair or justified allocation of resources, emphasizing the needs of the disadvantaged; develop a community information system; encourage the learning and appreciation of local culture and parents' occupation; develop or strengthen an assessment system that reflects ability, moral conduct and ethics; and provide incentives for attracting teachers.

The discussion on housing and community development for low-income groups centered around a project called *Baan Man Kong* (permanent house) for slum dwellers. The project is aimed at providing living quarters of good condition for the poor in slum areas, emphasizing the more permanent settlement of slum dwellers. In the past, government assistance in housing provided low-cost flats that had a high turn-over problem because the poor families who are eligible for the right to occupy a unit would always sell their right to people in a higher income bracket. Under the Baan Man Kong project, the house belongs to the community, while the government acts as a facilitator in its management. This project claims to be successful in obtaining the participation of the community and the people. The poor become more secure with regard to their housing. Further extension of the project was encouraged by the discussion group.

GROUP 2.2: Increasing Human Security at the Grass-roots

The group adopted the social capital framework that emphasizes trust, mutual understanding, shared value and behavior that creates connections among community members. Social capital and human security are positively related. It was noted that every aspect of human security is interlinked: the economy, food, health, the environment, the individual, the community, politics and spiritual aspects. Community human security is the basis for national security and international security. Human security is complex and dynamic. On the contrary, human rights and a culture of honesty are foundations for human security at the community level. This means that the rights of others as well as an individual's dignity should not be violated. There should not be autocracy (a system of government in which all the power is in the hands of a single individual). The group maintained that human security can come from correct thinking (*Sam-ma-thi-thi*). For example, there is a difference between thinking that "work is money and money is work" and "work is happiness and happiness is work." The latter can be achieved by anyone and such thinking creates self-satisfaction. For a community to have security its members should be self-reliant, mutually dependent (depending on one another), living

together in balance, and be happy both physically, socially and mentally. A series of risk factors were identified in the discussion, such as centralization of power through legal processes, economic control through the abuse of public support, and invisible control of the mass media, etc. In response to emerging political issues, the discussion group proposed a number of recommendations including encouragement of active participation or initiation of community members in community activities, application of local knowledge with support or facilitation from academics, the building of “community immunity” against external interference or control, etc.

3. Increasing Economic Security

GROUP 3.1: Economic System and Human Security

The emphasis of this group was to review the characteristics of an economic system that enhances human security. The discussion included a review of economic security at three levels: social protection, the role of the government in poverty eradication, and the underground economy and mafia. Major issues discussed included:

- Economic systems and risks
- Market mechanisms
- Social protection
- Eradication of basic poverty
- Underground economy
- Economic policy

Economic activities involve risks. The discussion noted, along the line of Joseph Schumpeter’s hypothesis, that too much economic security, without risks, creates no incentive for business activity, investment, and competition; an example is the failure of many socialist countries. Market mechanisms such as competition involve risks. This makes an economic system more efficient. However, extreme dependence on the market mechanism involves too much risk, particularly in the financial market where there is a high degree of fluctuation and risk of financial crisis. Intervention in such markets is necessary to reduce risks. Competition under the free market mechanism has to be under fair rules and regulations (good corporate governance). If winners are successful based on cronyism or connections, economic security cannot be achieved.

Social protection can serve as a safety net to reduce adverse impacts of economic risks. Economic competition involves winners and losers and economic activities can be up and down. In addition, workers who are a major factor of production are human beings who are subject to health problems, the inevitability of retirement, as well as the possibility of unemployment or being laid-off. Social protection with wide coverage that is sustainable is needed. Otherwise, those who are affected by economic risks could not recover. The group held the view that migrant workers should also be eligible for basic social protection, but supports would be

needed from international agencies because of the high costs involved.

Poverty is a serious threat to human security. It is an obstacle to human development and a major cause of chronic insecurity. A good approach to the eradication of poverty must be sustainable. Good strategies include the empowerment and participation of the poor, as well as continuous monitoring. Policy on poverty eradication should be flexible and suitable to the problems of different areas or situations.

An underground economy does not promote human security if the activity is based on certain “mafia” figures (influential persons) because there is no way to ensure security. The management or formalization of the underground economy must avoid dependence on the mafia or cronyism. The lessons learned from a case study indicate that it is not easy to formalize the underground economy.

In making policy recommendations, more intensive study is needed to identify concrete responses. Optimal weight has to be given to various objectives. For the time being, the group urged that a good policy is one that would not increase economic risks. Each policy should be reviewed carefully through the promotion of people’s participation in policy-making. Otherwise, carelessly designed policy could result in added economic risks and increased human insecurity.

GROUP 3.2: Increasing Economic Security at the Grass-roots Level

Economic development at the grass-roots level has been a major development strategy in both the Eighth and Ninth Five-Year Plans, as well as the government’s policy. Economic security at the grass-roots level plays an important role in the development of the economy as a whole by

- Increasing the community’s capacity to become self-sufficient and shock proof against external impacts
- Alleviating community poverty
- Increasing the country’s competitiveness
- Promoting economic growth with stability and sustainability

Economic development at the grass-roots level can be classified into public and private development. For the Ninth Plan, the grass-roots economic development approach has adopted the “sufficiency economy” principle as a guideline. The principle means moderation, reasonable thinking, and good protection from external impacts. The policies in general are as follows:

1. Building people’s capacity in community development;
2. Creating opportunities for occupational development, employment, and access to sources of funds; and
3. Promoting participatory management as well as the reform of rural and urban development.

The government's policy with regard to economic development at the grass-roots level emphasizes three measures: increase income, reduce expenditure, and open up opportunities. During the period 2002-2003, projects on economic development at the grass-roots level include: (a) community economic development; (b) the One-Tambon-One-Product project; (c) Village Fund; (d) People's Bank; (e) Debt Suspension for Small-scale Farmers; (f) New Entrepreneur Creation (NEC); and (g) Conversion of Assets into Capital.

The implementation of the policy has been successful.

1. It has helped create jobs and generate income, particularly in the rural areas.
 - Unemployment in the rural areas decreased from 3.4 percent in 2001 to 2.2 percent in 2002 (the first time ever in the last five years that unemployment in the rural areas was lower than that of the urban areas).
 - Household income has increased by almost 10 percent.
2. It has, to an extent, solved the fundamental problem of giving people access to formal sources of credit.
 - Ninety-four percent of the members of the Village and Urban Community Fund had access to the Fund.
 - Ninety percent of the self-employed who applied for small credits received credits from the People's Bank.
3. People have more opportunities to build their earning-capacity while the number of economically sufficient and strong villages has increased.
 - Skill development has led to a variety of products from the community.
 - Activities emphasizing networks of occupational groups are preconditions for a community's sufficiency economy.
 - The stability of a community's funds, the affection and care of the people for their community, as well as the willingness to help each other indicate the strength of the community.

A role for the community in economic development at the grass-roots level is to strengthen people's thinking or community intellect by (a) adjusting people's reasoning process in order to emphasize self-sufficiency and self-reliance as well as the community's "intelligence capital," (b) creating community consciousness, (c) changing behavior, and (d) creating community strength.

The group suggested the use of a community plan with a view to learning about the community and strengthening the community. A community plan is

formulated by the community and for the community. It contains community data and information, an analysis, and direction for solving community problems. A community plan is dynamic and community planning is a continuous process that needs to be updated all the time.

The group made recommendations on three major issues:

1. Guidelines for increasing economic security at the grass-roots level
 - Actions (to strengthen economic security) should be taken at the community level consistent with the economic development at the national level, within the framework of a self-sufficiency economy.
 - Community members should be able to learn and plan by themselves and by interacting with the outside world.
 - Integration among development agents should be emphasized, with a focus on the target area and community.
2. Guidelines and approach to promoting economic security
 - The principle of a self-sufficient economy should be applied at all levels, from the individual, family, community, and entrepreneur level, to that of businessmen, and from the village, tambon, and amphur levels to the provincial levels.
 - The community planning process should be utilized for the purpose of developing the grass-roots economy, with support from the public sector and development agents.
 - The number of community learning centers should be increased in each region.
 - A network of government agencies, in connection with the private sector, should be established for the purpose of providing technical assistance in tackling the problems of the grass-roots economy.
3. The role of the parties concerned in promoting economic security at the grass-roots level
 - Government:
 - i) Should change its role from directing or giving orders to assisting and providing the assistance needed or requested by the community.
 - ii) Should intervene to solve the problems which cannot be solved by the community, especially on making policies and measures to protect the community against possible external impacts.
 - Community:

- i) Should concentrate on the process of making community plans continuously.
- ii) Should develop a learning process.
- iii) Should establish networks.
- Private sector:
 - i) Should support and interact with community businesses.
 - ii) Should create jobs in the community.

GROUP 3.3: The Role of the Business Sector and State Enterprises in Supporting Community Security

This group remarked that looking at the poor as being impoverished and desperate is not a good approach toward helping them. By giving the poor only social welfare is not an effective way to them because doing so would weaken them. The group felt that the poor should be empowered by providing them with knowledge or know-how, capital, or opportunities so that they could help themselves, and become self-reliant. The poor can be viewed as businessmen who fail because of lack of knowledge, capital, or opportunity. Thus, by teaching them to do business more effectively, they can become “non-poor.”

The group emphasized that teaching the poor how to do business should be done by the business sector. It has been recognized that the business sector and some state enterprises are capable of doing business and using their resources, skills and knowledge to support the government sector in helping the rural poor. Thus, business agencies should be encouraged to participate in this type of community development. Currently, many businesses and state enterprises have used their own resources to strengthen communities, either directly or indirectly. Success stories of projects conducted by the Population and Community Development Association and other private companies were cited. State enterprises can also play a similar role with similar objectives for community security. Currently, there is a group of state enterprises called the “Forum of State Enterprises for Community Development (FSECD)” that was formed in December 1998, consisting of members from 43 state enterprises. The community work of the Forum consists of promoting community products, increasing outlets for community products, and increasing the production capacity of the community. However, the performance of that organization is still not satisfactory and needs improvement.

Experience indicates that the business sector can participate in strengthening community economic security through activities on income generation, education improvement, environmental conservation, and social development.

Some activities of the private sector in strengthening communities include:

1. Income-generating activities

- Sweden Motor Co. Ltd.’s project at Baan Cha-om on techniques for growing garden trees
 - American Express Co. Ltd.’s financial support for a silk-weaving group at Baan Nong-Takai
2. Educational improvement activities
 - Scholarships from East Water Co. Ltd.
 - The establishment of schools with financial support from the James Clark Foundation
 3. Environmental conservation activities
 - The village piped-water supply project requires those eligible to participate to grow vegetables.
 - Mobile units that monitor environmental conservation.
 - Youth and environment conservation project
 4. Social development activities
 - Family planning
 - Care for orphans, the disabled, and people living with AIDS
 - Forming groups and organizations for the promotion of democracy

The group recommended that the government should provide incentives to encourage the participation of the business sector in building community security. For example, the government may consider integrating the business sector with the One-Tambon-One-Product project, tax incentives may be provided to industries that are located in areas with intensive employment of local people, etc. The group also recommended that the government consider relocating a number of government agencies to provincial areas to help decentralize business activities.

4. Health Security

The group focused on the problem of illicit drugs, the environment, road accidents, and health insurance. These problems are considered to be unresolved issues, which have a considerable impact on health security.

A. *Illicit drugs*: The issue of illicit drugs is a dynamic problem that affects many parties. It is interrelated with other social and economic problems. Measures to deal with the problem must also be dynamic, systematic and take various forms. The group noted that political will already exists and serious measures have been taken, but more information is needed and the actions taken should be continuous.

Evaluation of policy implementation must be conducted both in Thailand and in other countries.

B. *Environmental problems*: Environmental problems are widespread and closely linked to economic

security. Collective and integrated actions are needed to solve the problems. A one-sided approach to finding solutions to problems can create conflicts or misunderstanding among the parties concerned. A more holistic or integrated approach, which is based on benefiting the people and the society, is thus recommended.

C. Traffic accidents: Traffic accidents are a major cause of death in Thailand, and the trend is increasing owing to reliance on personal means of transport rather than on the mass transit system. Corrective actions to date are usually aimed at correcting the outcome not the cause, such as uncoordinated policies and plans, inefficient resource management, inactive implementing agencies, and unpredictable government interventions. The group maintained that the key factors to achieving success in tackling the problems of traffic accidents include formulation or collection of related knowledge, dissemination of the knowledge through the mass media, creating and mobilizing networks of people, communities and society, and implementation of these measures through policy entrepreneurs.

D. Health care scheme: The health care scheme and health insurance (e.g., Health Welfare Card, Social

Insurance, 30-Baht Health Care Scheme) have contributed to the health security of many Thais during the past few decades. Although the group noticed an improvement in the availability of health services, the quality of health care still remains an issue that clouds the health security of the people. Problems of inadequate funding and uneven distribution among service providers still existed. The group, however, concluded that the health security of the Thai people has been improving, especially physically. The group was of the view that the Thai people and society have considerable capacity and opportunities to improve health security both in general and in terms of the equality of distribution. This can be achieved by focusing on unresolved issues or major problems that have an impact on a large number of people. These unresolved problems are usually complicated and linked to other aspects of human security (such as the economy, food, education, and the environment). Therefore, a holistic approach to the problem, which does not only consider the medical or health factors, is recommended. In general, the major factors that contribute to health security are knowledge, the capacity of the people, communities and society, and the existence of political will and administrative reform.

