

Disable and Rehabilitated People in Urban Context of Thailand

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1. Introduction

Part of the current urban society members includes disable and elderly people. In the past, there was no much difference between the urban and rural inhabitation in Thailand, That is to say the gracious and neighborly society. The social expansion gradually developed while families crucially seen as the solid foundation of daily living. Along that perceptual context eluded lonesome to disable and elderly people. The conventional Thai way of living in paying respect to elder persons and ancestors, giving hands to the others created no social gap within the society. It was the specific urban society based on Thai culture generated by being a river city, geographically speaking. Such society, simple and non-aggressive way of lives as well as caring to others brought about neither social problem nor members being abandoned. When it was westernized and became the skyscraper society, such social perception completely changed. The Bangkok way of lives enormous affected by globalization phenomenon. Meanwhile, a number of elderly people increased that the state welfare and social security provision considered in demand. As a result, an external aid to elderly, disabled and underprivileged people seen essential. The objective of presenting this article is to revealing the specific character of Bangkok, a river city, along with the situation of disabled and elderly people including the plan of social security network initiation by the state of these underprivileged person.

2. The Situation of Disable and Again People

2.1 The Situation of Again

The proportion and percentage of elderly people is much likely elevated. Following the survey in 2002 there was elderly people 5.97 million or 9.4 per cent of the national population that was about 63.39 million. The classification comprised elderly male 2.73 million and 3.24 female. Considering the percentage based on region, the highest one came from the north. 11.1 per cent of the entire population, 10.6 per cent from the central part. 8.7 per cent in the south and 8.6 per cent in the northeast in respect. The least percentage came from Bangkok, only 7.8 per cent. As the number of population in Bangkok reaches the top of the country, thus, elderly people here climb up to 619,400.

Table 1: The number and percentage of population by age groups, district and region

Unit: One Thousand

| Age groups | Total | Kingdom | | Bangkok | Region | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | | Municipal Area | Non-Municipal Area | | Central | Northern | Northeastern | Southern |
| Total % | 63,393.4 100.0 | 20,675.0 100.0 | 42,718.4 100.0 | 7,892.7 100.0 | 14,383.3 100.0 | 11,317.6 100.0 | 21,305.9 100.0 | 8,493.9 100.0 |
| Young age (0-14) % | 15,795.9 24.9 | 4,625.0 22.4 | 11,170.9 26.2 | 1,444.7 18.6 | 3,274.1 22.8 | 2,557.5 22.6 | 5,913.4 27.7 | 2,606.2 30.7 |
| Working-age(15-59) % | 41,628.5 65.7 | 14,198.1 68.7 | 27,460.4 64.2 | 5,828.6 73.9 | 9,577.5 66.6 | 7,503.1 66.3 | 13,567.9 63.7 | 5,151.4 60.6 |
| Elder age (60+) % | 5,969.0 9.4 | 1,851.9 8.9 | 4,117.1 9.6 | 619.4 9.6 | 1,531.7 10.6 | 1,257.0 11.1 | 1,824.6 8.6 | 736.3 8.7 |

Source: National Statistical Office. 2002. Report on the 2002 Survey of Elderly in Thailand.

Looking at the number of elderly people in municipality, it was less than the one from non-municipality. The hypothesis based on the fact that the elderly people might stay home while grown-up people migrated themselves to cities for their livelihood. The female percentage got higher, 55.3 comparing to male 44.7, while the percentage was 53.8 and 46.2 respectively in non-municipality.

Table 2: The number and percentage of Elder age by sex and district

Unit: One Thousand

| Age groups | Total | Kingdom | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | | Municipal Area | Non-Municipal Area |
| Total % | 5,969.0 100.0 | 1,851.9 100.0 | 4,117.1 100.0 |
| Male % | 2,729.1 45.7 | 828.7 44.7 | 1,900.4 46.2 |
| Female % | 3,239.9 54.3 | 1,023.2 55.3 | 2,216.7 53.8 |

Source: National Statistical Office. 2002. Report on the 2002 Survey of Elderly in Thailand.

2.2 The Situation of Disable

Table 3: Numbers and percentage of disable persons by source of data.

| Source of Data | Number in Thousands | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| | Population | Disable Persons | Percentage of Disable Persons |
| 1970 Population and Housing Census | 34,397.4 | 142.2 | 0.4 |
| 1974 Health and Welfare Survey | 39,796.9 | 209 | 0.5 |
| 1976 Health and Welfare Survey | 42,066.9 | 245 | 0.6 |
| 1977 Health and Welfare Survey | 44,211.5 | 296.2 | 0.7 |
| 1978 Health and Welfare Survey | 45,344.2 | 324.6 | 0.7 |
| 1981 Health and Welfare Survey | 47,621.4 | 367.5 | 0.8 |
| 1986 Health and Welfare Survey | 51,690 | 385.6 | 0.7 |
| 1991 Health and Welfare Survey | 57,046.5 | 1,057.00 | 1.8 |
| 1996 Health and Welfare Survey | 59,902.8 | 1,024.10 | 1.7 |
| 2001 Health and Welfare Survey | 62,871.0 | 1,100.80 | 1.8 |

Source: National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

Table 4: Situation of disable persons registered by disability classification, gender and region, November 1, 1994 – November 30, 2003

| Region | Number in Thousands | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | Type of Disability | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Eyed Blindness | | | Hearing | | | Deformity | | | Psychosis | | |
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Bangkok | 1,283 | 874 | 2,157 | 2,672 | 2,367 | 5,039 | 6,922 | 3,395 | 10,317 | 482 | 169 | 651 |
| Central and Northern | 3,374 | 2,935 | 6,309 | 5,766 | 4,850 | 10,616 | 27,386 | 14,243 | 41,629 | 1,163 | 750 | 1,913 |
| North | 4,499 | 3,825 | 8,324 | 6,265 | 5,100 | 11,365 | 24,749 | 14,034 | 38,783 | 1,101 | 685 | 1,786 |
| Northeastern | 8,868 | 8,523 | 17,391 | 9,790 | 8,314 | 18,104 | 40,354 | 22,261 | 62,615 | 1,833 | 1,291 | 3,124 |
| South | 2,082 | 1,577 | 3,659 | 4,313 | 3,618 | 7,931 | 13,218 | 6,606 | 19,824 | 568 | 391 | 959 |
| Total | 20,106 | 17,734 | 37,840 | 28,806 | 24,249 | 53,055 | 112,692 | 60,539 | 173,168 | 5,147 | 3,286 | 8,433 |

Number in Thousands

| Region | Type of Disability | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------|---------------|---------|--------|---------------|-----------|--------|--------------|-----------|---------|----------------|
| | Eyed Blindness | | | Hearing | | | Deformity | | | Psychosis | | |
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Bangkok | 1,767 | 1,084 | 2,851 | 1,272 | 780 | 2,052 | 39 | 26 | 65 | 14,437 | 8,695 | 23,132 |
| Central and Northern | 3,374 | 6,003 | 5,057 | 11,060 | 49,965 | 3,722 | 8,687 | 377 | 234 | 611 | 49,034 | 31,791 |
| North | 4,499 | 6,042 | 5,010 | 11,052 | 4,960 | 3,600 | 8,560 | 727 | 458 | 1,185 | 48,343 | 32,712 |
| Northeastern | 8,868 | 9,683 | 8,204 | 17,887 | 6,347 | 4,620 | 10,967 | 1,601 | 1,186 | 2,787 | 78,476 | 54,399 |
| South | 2,082 | 3,488 | 3,001 | 6,489 | 2,689 | 1,994 | 4,683 | 265 | 188 | 453 | 26,623 | 17,357 |
| Total | 20,106 | 26,983 | 22,356 | 20,233 | 20,233 | 14,716 | 34,949 | 3,009 | 2,092 | 5,101 | 216,913 | 144,972 |

Source: Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups.

3. Urban Context of Thailand: Bangkok

3.1 Geographical Setting of Bangkok

Bangkok has been the capital of Thailand since 1882. It is situated on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, the main river of the country, the main river of the country.

It is in the middle of the flood plain which is very rich rich growing region and referred to as the “rice-blow” of the country. It is approximately 20 km. From the Gulf of Thailand, where the highly navigable Chao Phraya River flows, thus giving the city a good access to the open seas. The land is rich because of alluvial soils and the plain has little elevation, ranging from some 1 to 10.5 m. above to the sea level. The whole area is a network of Klongs (Canals) natural drainage channels, and the others were dug in the early times to open new paddy field and establish settlements. One western author described the lively scene of Bangkok in 1780’s as the following:

“The ground on which (the town) is built is a rich tract of alluvial land, low and interested by numerous winding creek and canals, (which,) navigable a part of every tide, are ramified in all directions, and reach almost every house...”

At the beginning of its founding, Bangkok was less than four square kilo meters, limited by the Chao Phraya River, the big wall, fortress and canals. The grand palace was the city’s cultural center whereas Chinatown was the

commercial and business center. Individuals use the river and canals for communication and transportation.

3.2 The Modernization and Urbanization of Bangkok

The trade contract between Siam (Thailand) and the Great Britain known as the “Bowring Treaty of 1855”, as well as other trade negotiations with western countries, brought about changes and reforms in the kingdom.

From 1856 onwards, when Thailand accepted the “open door policy” to survive colonization from western countries, the city became wealthy. Economic growth was caused by the increase in trade with foreign countries. Rice and other tropical agricultural products became the main exports of Thailand. While Bangkok was developing new commercial and industrial relationships with the West, some efforts at city planning were made. Hence, roadways were built.

Rapid and drastic governmental changes during King Rama VII’s reign set the stage for a new phase of development in Rattanakosin (now the inner city). More roads were built on the eastern side of Bangkok. Transportation by waterways was virtually replaced by roadways, except for the delivery of commercial goods. The city’s expansion resulted in the road networks.

4. Settlement History

In a matter of half a century, Bangkok has emerged from its ancient pre-industrial city past to become an impressive modern city. The name “Bangkok” first appeared on a map in reference to a fortress, and its growth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not surpass that of other cities in Thailand.

4.1 The Early Rattanakosin Period

In 1782, the capital of Thailand was moved from Thonburi to Bangkok and closely modeled on the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. In Bangkok the magnificent Grand Palace and two smaller neighboring palaces were erected and were surrounded by strategically placed moats, walls and fortifications. King Rama I named the city Krung Rattanakosin, which means “the city of angles” The city walls were built in 1783 during the construction of the Grand Palaces and the Temple of Emerald Buddha, which are situated close to the river and secluded from the rest of the city.

During peacetime, the city's canals provided important means of transportation, recreation and drainage to the Chao Phraya River. They were interconnected by an intricate system of secondary canals, which acted as important transportation routes. The cityscape remained almost unchanged until the 1850s at time the city entered a period of modernization, initiated by in-creasing international trade. The trade contract between Siam (now Thailand) and the Great Britain know as the "Bowring Treaty of 1855", as well as other trade negotiations with western countries, brought about changes and reforms in the kingdom.

While Bangkok was developing new commercial and industrial relationships with the West, some efforts at city planning were made. Hence, roadways were built (some say so that foreign dignitaries could ride their horses). Yet the canals and rivers remained major transportation routes.

The per-industrial city period of Bangkok was characterized by the introduction of modern utilities and facilities, which might have led to its full industrialization. Unfortunately, Bangkok never experienced a true industrial revolution. Instead, it went directly from begin a per-industrial city with some modernization to become the primate city in Thailand, whose status remains the same till today.

4.2 The Primate City Period: 1932 to the Present

The year 1932 marked the beginning of Thailand's government under a constitutional monarchy. The new political system brought an enthusiasm for development and modernization and concurrently, city planning in the capital city of Bangkok was slowly developed. The major construction of a major transport network. Highway linking the capital Road from Bangkok to the East, Paholyothin Road to the North and Charansanitwong to the South.

The national development planning was also first introduction in Thailand during this period. The first National Development Plan was drafted in 1957, and each subsequent plan has been implemented over a five-year period. National planning, especially as carried out by the first three National Plans, Played a dominant role in converting Thailand's economy from agriculture based one to an industrialized one. Bangkok became the only center in the country to possess a wide range of socio-economic activities. Because of rural development failures and the constant immigration of rural people, Bangkok has grown exponentially, both in terms of area and population. The population of the inner city area of Rattanakosin swelled dramatically, due to mass in-migration of people from

other parts of the country flocking to the city to seek better employment opportunities. Nowadays more than half of the country's total investment is centered in Bangkok. It has never been challenged by any other urban centers of Thailand and has become well known as a perfect primate city in this region of the world. Yet the rapid and haphazard growth of the city has generated problems, not only in the urban area itself but also in the surrounding rural areas.

5. Problem of Bangkok

The Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR) has about 42% of the urban population in Thailand. Like many of the world's old cities, Bangkok has grown rapidly in modern times, albeit haphazard. The city has been facing the many problems.

(1) Ever worsening traffic congestion

The city has sprawled outward, with residential areas occupying its fringes. Commuters travel to the city center everyday contributing to a tremendous traffic volume. Such volume has grown rapidly in recent years, and already exceeds the capacity of much of the road network over a large part of the day. Traffic capacity in and around the city center has not grown in line with traffic volume due to a lack of road space. The result is extremely serious and chronic traffic congestion, which exists over a wide area for long periods during the day. Congestion affects all forms of traffic, although buses are marginally better off because of bus lanes. With about 35,000 new cars added each year, traffic congestion in Bangkok has become one of the worst in the world. The cost to the city in terms of fuel, vehicle operating cost, time loss, pollution, and frustration remains serious problems.

(2) Water supply and land subsidence

The overdraw of groundwater has caused land subsidence, especially in central and eastern Bangkok. Insufficient water over a large area, combined with rapid urbanization in areas without water supply has spurred further overdraw of groundwater and land subsidence. In turn land subsidence has caused an increase in construction cost and damage to a number of existing infrastructures.

(3) Flooding

Bangkok is located on the flat deltaic area of the Chao Praya River. Ground levels in the city core are only about 0.5-1.7 m. above the mean sea level. Inundation is a perennial problem. In August and September, it is caused mainly by the rainfall and in October and November by the river overflow and the inability to drain rainwater due to the high river level. The

high river level stays from October to December because of the seasonal set-up of the Gulf of Thailand and the high runoff from the North.

The extent and duration of flooding is aggravated by the present state of the drainage system, which has not kept pace with rapid urbanization. The once extensive system of canals (klongs) draining towards the Chao Praya River has been filled in many places to make way for roads. Storm sewers and the remaining klongs cannot cope with runoff over an ever increasing impervious surface area. Klongs are poorly maintained in many parts, among other due to a serious squatting problem.

(4) Air pollution

The air pollution problem is becoming more and more serious. Air pollution comes mainly from motor vehicles and factories. Ambient monitoring data indicated substantially high levels for all major pollutants. Lead emission from gasoline exhibit a clearly increasing trend. Lead from all sources is potentially the most serious environmental health hazard.

(5) Water pollution

Most of the klongs in and around Bangkok are now severely polluted that they are anaerobic and usually foul smelling. According to TDRI (1988), households caused about 75% of the total biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) load in the BMR, while factories accounted for the remaining 25%. Many klongs are heavily squatted; this has led to the increase in BOD load and the decrease in drainage capacity of the klongs.

(6) Inadequacy of public parks and open spaces for recreation

Bangkok is so crowded and congested. The public parks and open spaces for recreation are inadequate. Even though land in the outer city districts has been utilized for agricultural purposes, and a part of these areas has been designated as a greenbelt zone, it cannot properly function as urban greenery. The preservation objective cannot be strictly followed. High land prices have contributed to the problem by making the returns from agriculture very low in comparison to other economic activities.

6. Social Assistance Programs for Vulnerable Groups

Social assistance programs in Thailand have been provided for specific groups with problems. There is no universal coverage in social assistance. Furthermore social assistance programs per head have been very small and not adequate. The concept is to provide temporary assistance only. Assistance programs include sickness or health care, assistance to people

with disability, the elderly, women, children, the unemployed, minority people, and the poor.

The world defines “social safety nets” as encompassing “various transfer programs designed to play both a redistributive and risk reduction role in poverty reduction. The redistributive role is intended to reduce the impact of poverty and the risk reduction role is intended to protect individuals, households, and communities against uninsured income and consumption risks”. The target groups of safety nets are (a) the chronically poor, (b) the temporarily poor, and (c) those groups, transient poor or not, directly by adjustment.

Table 5: Social Assistance Programs for Vulnerable Groups

| Project | Target | Benefits |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Social Services for Children in families; Adoption service; Welfare Institutions | -Children | -Counseling; financial and material support; Child support for foster families; Government institutions. |
| 2. Services for Disadvantaged Woman | -Women and girl | -Protection/ welfare; Occupational training; Alternative to Prostitution |
| 3. Revolving Fund for Woman | -Rural women | -No-interest 15,000 baht loan per group to be repaid within 2 years |
| 4. Services for Older Persons | -Elderly persons | -Homes for the elderly and monthly allowances |
| 5. Services for People with Disabilities | - People with Disabilities | -Rehabilitation center; monthly allowances; Job-creation; employment services |
| 6. Services for Hill People | - Hill People | -Occupation Education, social and Public utility development |
| 7. Families/ Communities Services | -People in distress | -Temporary shelters, occupational training, fund and loans for job-creation |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 8. Services for Disaster Victims | - Disaster victims | -Relief fund; Cost of funeral, Health care; Construction Materials; Immediate services |
| 9. Emergency Loan (Pawnshop) families; Foster families; Adoption Services; Welfare Institutions | -General Public | -Assist the poor needy |
| 10. Services for the Destitute | -Beggar | -To provide physical, mental and occupational rehabilitation services |
| 11. Services for HIV Infected Person | - HIV-Infected Person | -Vocational grant, living allowance, government homes for HIV-Infected children |
| 12. Village Welfare Center | -Disadvantaged and people in distress | -Revolving fund and loan; total 68,708 villages have been Supported. |

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Bangkok is located on delta of the Chao Phraya river which is an alluvial posit consisting of a thick layer of fine clay and silt that makes it a very fertile land. For half a century, Bangkok emerged from its ancient image to become a modern city. In 1782, the capital of Thailand was moved from Thonburi to Bangkok and closely modeled on the most famous ancient capital of Ayuthaya, a city surrounded by water. King Rama I named the city “Krung Rattanakosin” which means “the city of angles” The Bangkok city walls were built in 1783 during the construction of the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, which are situated close to the river and secluded to the river and secluded from the rest of the city. Within the area, canals provided important means of transportation, recreation and the livelihood of people. People were able to choose their own habitats and lived together in the co-existence between urban and rural lives. The cityscape remained almost unchanged until the 1850s at which time the city entered a period of modernization, initiated by increasing international trade. The trade contract between Siam (Thailand) and the Great Britain, known as the “Bowring Treaty of 1855” as well as other trade negotiations with western countries, brought about changes and reforms in Kingdom. Bangkok developed new commercial and industrial linkages with the West. Rapid and

drastic governmental changes during King Rama VII's reign set the stage for a new phase of development of Bangkok. Transportation by waterways was virtually replaced by roadways. The city's expansion occurred along the new road networks. The unbalance between the water based and land based city development has destroyed the multi-habits of Bangkok and created the urban problems with the dilemma in everyday life of Bangkokians at present. To alleviate the problem, the advantages provided by the water based status must be recalled and develop them with the land based habitats to achieve sustainable Bangkok.