

Piloting Community Approaches in Southern Thailand

Knowledge Management Note

KM Note 3

Youth-focused Community-Driven Development Results and Lessons Learned

Background

In January 2004, a century-long struggle in Thailand's southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat that had been dormant for decades broke into open violence. Since then, killings and bombings have been regular occurrences – claiming the lives of over 4,000 people.

The conflict stems from various factors, key among them are the following: lack of sufficient sensitivity towards Malay ethnic and religious identity and language and limited political integration, including under-representation of Malay-Muslims in local political and government structures. Relative economic deprivation as well as government policies and approaches since 2004 contribute to the sense of injustice.

In 2007-2008, the World Bank through the State and Peace-Building Fund (SPF) provided technical assistance to the Thai Government to help understand the conflict and recommend ways to facilitate conflict resolution in these areas. To complement the conflict study, additional grant funds were obtained to examine gender-related dimensions of conflict impacts and ways to engage youth – given international experience identifying them as a risk group – and enhance their participation in community activities. Together these studies and activities informed the design of a second phase to pilot community approaches in the conflict-affected areas.

This note, the third in a series of brief, operationally relevant pieces meant to inform a broad range of stakeholders about the design, implementation, and results of the Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situation Project, summarizes the lessons learned from

the grant entitled Piloting Youth-focused Community-Driven Development (CDD) in the Conflict-Affected Provinces in Thailand.

Project Objectives

Implemented between November 2008 and June 2009, the objectives of the youth-focused CDD pilot project were to:

- Engage with youth in the conflict-affected areas, to give them voice, as well as build leadership skills so that they are positive contributors to peace building;
- Engage with local development agencies that work with conflict-affected youth; and
- Document lessons learned from youth-focused CDD and other initiatives, deepen understanding on the conditions of youth in the conflict situation in the south, and examine their potential contribution and challenges towards peace-building.

Project Description

The youth project provided five block grants of approximately THB 120,000 (USD 3,400) to youth groups in four communities and one youth network in southern Thailand for local development activities that youth themselves identified, proposed, and implemented.

Project Management

Management of the Piloting Youth-focused CDD Project was the responsibility of the Local Development Institute (LDI), a non-governmental organization that aims to promote community, local, and civil society strengthening. Community facilitators, three females

and two males – four of whom were Muslim and one Buddhist, were hired by LDI to work with each group to ensure implementation of the CDD approach as well as establish relationships with key leaders in the participating communities, sub-districts, and civil society organizations in the area.

Selection of Participating Youth Groups

Participating youth groups were selected using research data from the SPF conflict study as well as information from civil society organizations active in the area. Criteria included communities where 1) provincial coordinators had experience working together with community leaders, 2) there were sufficiently strong youth group leaders, 3) there were some activities in which both Muslims and Buddhists participate, and 4) it was sufficiently safe to work. The target youth network was selected given its inclusive membership and experience working with a range of groups within and outside the areas.

Sub-project Cycle

The project's block grant cycle consisted of six main steps typical of a CDD project, although adapted due to the small size of the grants, the limited capacity of target group members, and the abbreviated implementation period.

1. Information and Institutional Preparation. Given the risks associated with engaging youth in conflict-affected areas, at the start of the project a letter was sent to key government officials, including the Southern Border Provincial Administrative Center (SBPAC), key security agencies, governors of the three provinces, sub-district officials and community leaders to help ensure "space" for the project to operate.

After project sites were identified and community facilitators hired, a project orientation workshop was held to introduce facilitators, community leaders, and members of participating youth groups to the project's objectives and operational guidelines.

2. Social Preparation and Sub-project Planning. Facilitators, with the help of key formal and informal community leaders (men and women) invited to advise the project, worked to gather a representative group of youth (male and female) in each community. Once formed, the youth committee conducted an assessment

of community needs and priorities.

3. Proposal Development. The proposal development process involved a series of meetings, guided by the facilitator and respected adult advisors, where youth were encouraged to voice and discuss their ideas. Documentation was completed and proposals were then forwarded to LDI for approval.



4. Proposal Consideration and Approval. Almost any type of social and economic investment was eligible for financing, including small-scale infrastructure, capacity-building, and livelihood activities.

LDI appraised the proposals against the following criteria:

- Activities were identified and prioritized by youth groups within the communities;
- Inclusiveness, coverage and sustainability of benefits;
- Strong ownership as demonstrated by youth group and/or community contributions;
- Technical and financial feasibility; and
- Inclusion of an operation and maintenance plan.

Upon approval, LDI signed a contract with the youth implementing committee and transferred funds to an account opened by the youth group and facilitator.

5. Implementation. Youth groups, with the assistance of the facilitators and LDI oversight, implemented sub-projects according to steps outlined in the proposal. Training in leadership was provided during the implementation period. Regular forums provided opportunities to review progress and share implementation challenges.

6. *Completion.* Once activities were completed, LDI conducted a workshop with facilitators and participating youth groups to share experiences and lessons learned. The groups visited each other's communities to further enhance learning.



Activities Implemented

The five grants financed a diverse range of activities identified, prepared and implemented by youth that benefited members of the planning and implementing committees, youth groups and the wider communities.

In Yala (in the adjacent sub-districts of Neun Ngam, Wang Paya and Kotor Tierra), the 11 members (male and female) of the Peace-building Youth Network, assisted by representatives of the three sub-districts authorities involved, village heads and other respected adults, organized a youth football league, and revived activities in ten religious schools (Ta Di Ka) that since the unrest had been largely suspended. The network also equipped and continues to manage the operations and activities of a community library/learning center.



In the village of Joairong, Moo 1, in Narathiw, the youth group (with nine members on its administrative committee and 18 on the implementing committee)

assisted by the village leader and his assistant, a local religious leader, teachers and other adults, constructed a community shop that they manage as a cooperative. The shop is an important space for informal community leaders as well as adults and youth to gather. The group also makes handicrafts that it sells at the community shop and souvenir outlets in the district.



In Pulajemudo, Moo 5, in Narathiw, 19 members of the youth group with three adult advisors constructed a youth center. Once the center was completed, female youth were provided training in cloth making and tailoring.



In Kuannori in Pattani, a 12-person committee constructed a youth center on donated school land, and repaired the football goals on an adjacent field where they play every evening.

The fifth block grant supported a youth committee working with youth networks to provide media training for 80 youth, produce and air a short news segment on the Kuanori youth group, and establish a website to enhance communications about the youth network on issues relevant to the Southern provinces.



Outcomes

According to LDI, and more importantly, the participating youth themselves, the project yielded significant results.

1. Engaged youth

With its focus on placing youth at the center of the decision-making, implementation and management process, the project's approach succeeded in increasing the amount and quality of youth involvement in community activities.

2. Increased capacity

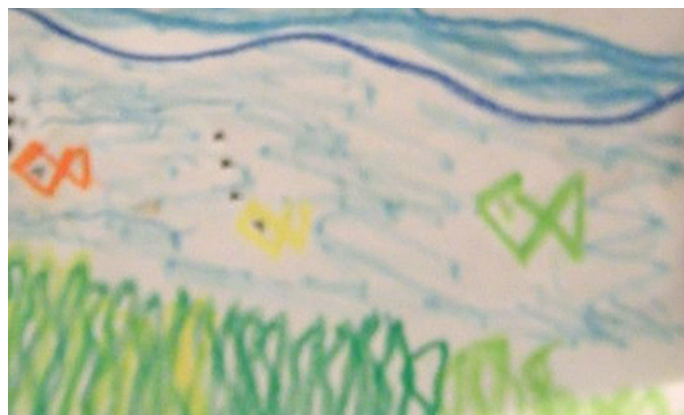
Involvement in the project enhanced the capacity of youth to identify, plan and manage local development activities. Participating youth reported increased self-confidence, the ability to express themselves and leadership skills. Enhanced capacity increases voice and in turn encourages engagement.



Lotus
(drawing by youth)

"I am like a lotus which has leaves under water, meaning I never knew my own potential nor was able to im-

prove myself. After participating in the project, the lotus begins to grow leaves and gradually emerges from the water. It means that the project has given me the opportunity to learn and form self-confidence including realizing my own capacity. I am comfortable speaking and exchanging opinions with others. And I feel more accepted and willing to improve myself." (Almin from Joairong)



Leading the Way
(drawing from youth)

"In the past, I always follow others because I was shy, not good at speaking and have no confidence like a fish that swam at the back of the shoal. Now I am confident, dare to express myself and made friends fun in working together. I am happier like a stronger fish that can lead the shoal." (Sagariya from Yala)

3. Met youth priorities

The activities financed by the block grants directly responded to the expressed priorities of the youth themselves, thereby enhancing ownership of and commitment to the implementation and management of project activities.

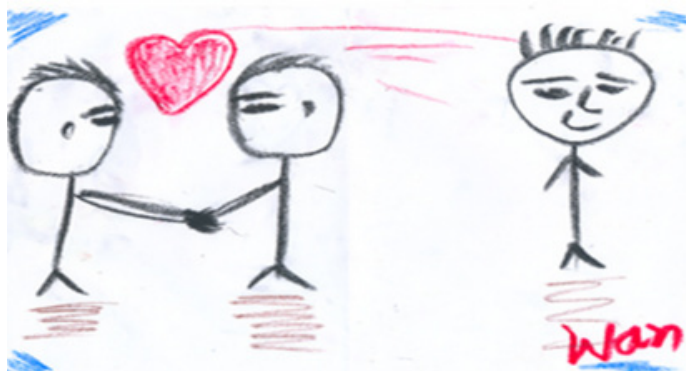
4. Mobilized support and inputs

Youth in all communities mobilized significant support and inputs from other community members and local organizations. In Yala, the Fourth Army Regiment opened the first football match attended by over 2,000 villagers and representatives of the Tambon (sub-district) Authority Organization (TAO). The TAO sponsored awards for the tournament and Ta Di Ka activities and constructed a new building for the community library. SBPAC also participated in the Ta Di Ka activities and donated ten computers to the library. The youth group mobilized the donation of

books from ten Bangkok-based organizations. Youth in Narathiwas requested and received newspapers for the community center from the TAO. The TAO civil engineer helped design the building and provided construction advice.

5. Enhanced relationships and social cohesion

Project design recognized the tensions that exist between youth and adults in conflict-affected communities. By providing opportunities to work together towards a common objective, the project appears to have helped to build and strengthen relationships among youth (male and female) within the communities, youth in neighboring areas, youth and adults (e.g., village leaders, teachers, parents and other respected persons), and youth and local authorities. The sharing of experiences encouraged by the project broadened the perspectives of the youth involved and increased their openness to learn. The enhanced communication and trust built could make a positive contribution to conflict reduction.



Friends
(drawing by youth)

“In the past, I lived in the community on my own. Now I get to know each other, working together binds us together and we have more friends and more unity.”
(Won from Pulajemudo)

6. Improved image

The constructive engagement of youth in productive activities improved the image of youth in participating communities. Although difficult to substantiate, this engagement has reportedly helped to weaken the connection between youth and insurgents in these areas.

Lessons Learned

The project yielded important experiences and lessons relating to the engagement and role of youth in community activities. These lessons, identified by youth and facilitators, were shared during a two-day workshop held at the end of the project.

1. Create “space” in which to operate

Informing the military, local government officials, community leaders and other such parties about project objectives, approach and meetings before and during implementation was critical to creating the “space” necessary for youth to engage in community activities. Initial and more formal written communications were followed by meetings and introductions to members of the youth committees. The military, local officials, community leaders and parents were all invited to attend meetings as observers and all project-related information was made available. These measures, which promoted openness and transparency, helped reduce suspicions on both sides and resulted in productive collaboration noted above.

2. Clarify expected roles and responsibilities of youth and local leaders

The project approach placed youth at the core of the decision-making process. Given the traditional roles formal and informal community leaders typically play in local development, it was necessary to specify the expected roles and responsibilities of local leaders.

A solid understanding of project procedures by all stakeholders allowed youth to assume the central roles in planning and implementation while local leaders and respected elders played important advisory and otherwise supportive roles. The suspicion placed on male youth in the conflict areas required that youth activities not be separated from and benefit the wider community.

3. Provide intensive support

The newness of the CDD model meant that youth groups required intensive and continued support throughout the project. Facilitators spent considerable time, capacity and strategy in trying to ensure widespread inclusion of youth in the sub-project process. Facilitators consulted with individuals and small groups in advance

of larger forums, explored ways of engaging females, coordinated with village leaders and other adults, fielded inquiries and concerns of parents and sought out “connectors” (e.g., a highly respected teacher).

Project facilitators had to be knowledgeable about the community development process as well as possess intimate knowledge of the communities in which they worked, gender dynamics, Muslim traditions, and the role of village elders and leaders as well as significant levels of trust demonstrated through experience working in their specific communities. The quality of facilitation was identified as a critical determinant of sub-project impact.

4. Ensure female involvement

The inclusion of female youth in sub-project processes proved a challenge and learning opportunity. In all the participating communities (although to varying degrees), there were distinct physical separations between males and females stemming from Muslim traditions (e.g., partitioned school classrooms). Despite the challenges, facilitators successfully sought and in most cases secured the participation of female youth by encouraging groups to align responsibilities and activities with the qualifications and interests of members. In certain communities, this resulted in activities specifically for female youth (e.g., sewing classes and making souvenirs) while in others females played core and supporting roles, such as providing financial management and accounting advice to community shops and announcing at football games.

Respected male and female community elders (including religious leaders) played important roles in encouraging female participation, in part by being present at all meetings. The quantity and quality of female participation in LDI-convened forums visibly increased.

5. Allow for flexibility and longer timeframe

The relatively low capacity and limited experience of youth in the conflict-affected southern provinces necessitated repeated clarification and simplification of procedures, communication in Malayu, and other adjustments such as frequent, short meetings to maintain momentum. The restricted timeframe limited the type of activities that could be implemented. Outcomes would have been enhanced if project support had been provided over a longer period of time.

For more information on the Project, contact the Local Development Institute at Tel: 66-2-621-7810-2; Mary Judd, Pamornrat Tansanguanwong, or Sarah Adam at World Bank Office, Bangkok at Tel: 66-2-686-8361 or pchockanapitaksa@worldbank.org.

KM Notes are produced under SPF Grant TF094106.

Knowledge Management Note Series Titles

No. Title

1. The Influence of Conflict Research on the Design of the Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situation Project
2. Gender and Development in Thailand’s Conflict Areas
3. Youth-focused Community Driven Development: Results and Lessons Learned
4. Creating “Space” for Interaction: Description of CACS Project Operations
5. CACS Project: Monitoring and Evaluation
