วารสารความเป็นธรรมทางสังคมและความเหลื่อมล้ำ

กว่าที่ความเป็นธรรมทางเพศจะเป็นเรื่องของเราทุกคน
บทเรียนการทำงานเพิ่มอำนาจให้ขบวนผู้หญิงรากหญ้าในประเทศไทย

How gender equality belongs to us all? - Lesson learned from empowerment based work with Thai Grass Root Women

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บทคัดย่อ

　　บทความชิ้นนี้เป็นการสรุปบทเรียนการทำงานเพื่อเสริมพลังอำนาจและศักยภาพของคนทำงาน เพื่อความเป็นธรรมทางเพศให้กับกลุ่มคนทำงานประเด็นผู้หญิงในประเทศไทย ทั้งเจ้าหน้าที่รัฐ เอ็นจีโอ ผู้นำ ชุมชนรากหญ้า และแกนนำเจ้าของปัญหา ซึ่งทำงานในประเด็นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความรุนแรงบนฐานเพศต่อ ผู้หญิงและการท้องไม่พร้อม จากโครงการพัฒนาหลายโครงการที่แผนงานสุขภาวะผู้หญิงและความเป็นธรรม ทางเพศ สมาคมเพศวิถีศึกษา ให้ทุนสนับสนุนการทำงานในช่วงปี พ.ศ. 2555-2559 ผู้เขียนเกี่ยวข้องกับงาน เหล่านี้ในฐานะผู้ประเมินผลภายในของแผนงานสุขภาวะผู้หญิงและความเป็นธรรมทางเพศ และพบบทเรียน สำคัญที่เป็นปัจจัยความสำเร็จของการทำงาน 5 ประการ คือ (1) แกนคณะทำงานต้องมาจากความร่วมมือ ระหว่างเจ้าของปัญหาโดยตรง กับผู้สนับสนุน ซึ่งเป็นคนที่อยู่ใกล้ชิด หรือเป็นผู้ที่เข้าใจและเห็นอกเห็นใจ ผู้ประสบปัญหา โดยทำงานร่วมกันแบบใช้อำนาจร่วมในลักษณะทีมพันธมิตร (2) การทำงานโดยใช้ฐานคิด ร่วมกันเรื่อง "สตรีนิยมแนวจิตวิญญาณเพื่อความเป็นธรรม" และใช้แนวทาง "สันติวิธี" ในการทำงาน (3) งาน จะสำเร็จได้เร็วขึ้นและง่ายขึ้น หากสามารถขยายความร่วมมือไปยังกลุ่มผู้มีอำนาจตัดสินใจในประเด็นปัญหาที่ เกิดขึ้น (4) การสร้างการรับรู้และมีส่วนร่วมของคนในชุมชนหรือองค์กรกับประเด็นปัญหาอย่างต่อเนื่องและ กว้างขวาง โดยเปิดพื้นที่และเนื้อหาของการสนทนาใหม่ๆ ที่ท้าทายความเชื่อเดิมของสังคมในประเด็นความ เป็นธรรมทางเพศ โดยเฉพาะกับผู้ชายและผู้เห็นต่าง โดยใช้เครื่องมือหลากหลาย และ (5) เป้าหมายของการ

ทำงานเพื่อสร้างการเปลี่ยนแปลงเชื่อมโยงกันตั้งแต่ระดับส่วนตัวและครอบครัว   จนถึงชุมชน   องค์กร   และโครงสร้างสังคม

คำสำคัญ: ความเท่าเทียมทางเพศ; การเสริมอำนาจ; สตรีรากหญ้า

Abstract

This article is a narrative study of Thai grass root women groups, whose works are supported by women wellbeing and gender equality program under the Sexuality Study Association. In between 2013 – 2016, the author has worked closely with the program as the main internal evaluator and facilitated the lesson learned process. This study explores empowerment factors, which support the women movement powerfully, provide intersectoral participations and made a valuable change. Samples women groups are selected from two main working issues; (1) Gender Based Violence: indigenous women group, southern Muslim women group, policewomen group, women from One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) by Ministry of Health, women from Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) and (2) Unintended Pregnancy: women group from Songkhla and Amnat Charoen Province. As a result, five empowerment based working procedures are recommended: (1) Understanding the "Anti-Oppression Spiritual-Based Feminism" concept (2) Resurrection of internal power (3) Understanding of social and cultural structures causing gender based violence (4) Result-Based Project Cycle Management design with power sharing among stakeholders and (5) Co-Design of Monitoring and Evaluation Process.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Empowerment; Grass Root Women

Introduction

This article is a lesson learned summary about empowerment in capacity building initiative for people working with women issues for gender equality in Thailand. All participants are government officials, NGOs, grassroots leaders and problem owners occupied with two issues: gender based violence against women and unintended pregnancy. These lessons are derived from the work of Women wellbeing and Gender Equality Program by the Sexualities Study Association, which granted various projects to local communities, government organizations and state enterprises between 2012-2016 (Wasi, Srisa-nga, Sanguanwong, & Vachirachai, 2016).

By the sexual violence topic, 7 accomplishment projects are selected and classified into 3 group based on different context. The first group is based on two minority case studies: Hmong ethnic group in northern Thailand and Thai Muslim in southern Thailand. Its main interest is the

cultural change of relationship between men and women in family. The next group is the project within a large organization: Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA). Its purpose is the policy and operation procedure development for prevention and resolution of sexual harassment in the workplace, which involves 13,500 personnel. And the last group is the project with the One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) in government hospitals. It aims to improve gender sensitivity, understanding and empathy for violence victims and individual with unintended pregnancy for government services, which consists of female inquiry officers, nurses, social workers and psychologists.

By the unintended pregnancy topic, the projects are implemented in community level both by parents/guardians and by collaboration among local community leaders, Tambon Health Promoting Hospitals (TMPHs) and District Hospitals.

As internal auditor of the Women wellbeing and Gender Equality Program, the author has conducted field works, interviews with key personnel, focus group discussions among projects beneficiaries and two self-assessment workshops by half and the end of the program. Lessons learned, which related with success factors for gender equality works, are explored from these processes. Five critical factors are introduced and discussed in this article.

Success Factor 1: The core team comprises of problem owners and empathized supporters, whose collaboration cultivates equal partnership.

To guarantee that the purpose and work process focus on the benefits and empowerment of the persons affected with problem, equal expression of power are encouraged within the working group. Based on their own experiences, the problem owners will provide information from their perspectives.(Bayeh, 2016) By the way, identification of their own needs and recommendation for the solution by themselves enable their self-confidence. Moreover, most of supporters as team members, who have more potential to access knowledge, funding resources, relationships, policy network and authorities, become additional source of power for the problem owners.

A case study of the Hmong ethnic group demonstrate this as well. In the past, married women were excluded from the family permanently. The achievement of the project is that: all of the Hmong families in Thailand accept the new tradition of allowing divorced women to return to their families. The working core group is consisted of women with domestic violence experiences, women leaders, male local community leaders, who are relatives of the first two groups and male Hmong university lecturers.

Another case study is development of a friendly and fair health service system for unintended pregnancy in Songkhla, which is the largest province in southern Thailand. Lecturers of the Faculty of Nursing, Songkhla University, which is the largest university in the region, cooperate with nurses of district hospitals, directors of District Health Promotion Hospitals and the village health volunteer team, who announce their phone number publicly for consultations service. Another key partners are lecturers from the Faculty of Medicine, who work in obstetrics and gynecology in the university hospital. The core group has change the local communities' behaviors. They could understand, accept, and talk more and openly about prevention and resolution of unintended pregnancy issues. As a result, the rate of unintended pregnancy has decreased significantly. After that the working scheme becomes one of the best practice of the District Health System (DHS) of the Ministry of Public Health.

The essential condition behind the success of team work is the "power-with" culture (Nikkhah, Redzuan, & Abu-Samah, 2011). The equal power begins with the formation of collective leadership from various sectors. To provide supportive working environments for shared power, some ground rules are generated such as regular meetings attendance, brainstorming and decision-making. In conflict situation or any tendency of power monopoly, program officer as internal auditor could intervene by using advisory, counseling and group facilitation tools. By the worst case, in which conflict could not be resolved, project termination would be optional.

Success Factor 2: Shared vision of "Women wellbeing and Gender Equality" and work practice of "nonviolence".

One of basic requirement for receiving granting support from the Women wellbeing and Gender Equality Program is that all project grantee have to participate the training workshop based on the conceptual framework of "Anti-oppression Spiritual-based Feminism".

This concept was developed by Ouyporn Khuankaew, an important feminist trainer of Thailand. Since 2007, this thought model was commonly implemented within women movement, who works with HIV, sexual diversity and reproductive health issues. After that, the idea was distributed among problem owners in grassroots level. Recently, with support of the program, the extended target groups are government officers, especially multidisciplinary team in the hospital and the female police.

By self-research, working experience with several international social activists such as Riane Eisler, Joanna Macy, Starhawk, Paulo Freire, George Lakey and Thich Nhat Hanh and her own

experiences of domestic violence, Ouyporn developed a spirituality based feminist concept for social justice (Khuankaew, 2020). Furthermore, as a trainer to grassroots women in neighboring countries for a long time, she has listen to a lot of suffering cases, with which most women have been facing.

By combining the gender equity lens with the social justice lens, this concept shifts the direction of working more inclusively. The important of participation from other sectors, not only women, are enhanced. With the shared vision of just society, which has power-with culture, human dignity, human value, gender equality, solidarity, sharing, caring and individual empowerment, more actors are invited. With the missions of (1) structural change to reduce the power-over of the oppressors in patriarchal society, (2) healing and empowering power-within of the oppressed such as women and other disadvantages to liberate themselves and (3) transform social relationship towards power-with culture, everybody could become the alliance for just society and/or gender equality movement.

Based on those vision and missions, nonviolent strategy and action plans could be designed implemented. From holistic well-being perspective, to achieve good life of both individual and society, nonviolence practice are required. Mindfulness, interconnectedness and system thinking are integral parts of nonviolence. Practicing mindfulness enables self-healing from suffering and power to help others. Interconnectedness, which is emerged from experience based group learning, provides understanding and awareness of other change agents in numerous sectors. Through power theory, root causes analysis of social problems and marginalization/mainstreaming concepts, system thinking supports deep and wide understanding of social complexity.

While most of women related issues have to deal with a lot of cultural frictions and scope of works often overlaps with male authority in the area or organizations, nevertheless most of the working team members are women. In community level, most of women were confined to cultural roles. They were told that good women must obey, follow and support families and communities. As well as in the organizations, most of them are low level workers with less opportunities to participate in any decision making processes for organizational change. Therefore, when the working team starts working in their communities, they begin with seeking for alliances by organizing the training for local leaders or targeted group based on those concepts.

Their self-liberation through mindfulness, open-minded for collaboration through interconnectedness viewpoint and strategic change through social complexity understanding are critical capabilities for success.

Success Factor 3: Collaboration with policy's makers could diminish resistances and achieve faster.

To achieve gender equality faster and easier, widespread collaborations should be established, especially with the decision-makers in the policy level. Always, their influences among community leaders, religious leaders, organizational leaders and government officers shape people opinions and emotion in both communities and organizations. The supportive attitude of the authorities could reduce the social barriers that working team are facing with. Also, it is the initial diminishment of mainstream patriarchy in Thai society.

Hmong women group is the first one who understand this crucial point. Continuously, they organize meetings for male Hmong leaders, where the vulgar crying sound of suffered women are heard, and their alliances increases. A leap forward occurs when a shaman groups and several clan leaders approved the change of traditional practice. The shamans assure that the ritual of getting divorced daughters back to the family can be conducted, because it was allowed in the past. In many areas, this group of shamans travel with the Hmong working team to host numerous family reunion ceremonies. Simultaneously, the clan leaders, who support the change, formally announce at the annual family convention that their clans welcome divorced daughters back to their families. Gradually, other clan leaders adopt this new practice in the following 1-2 years.

Muslim women group is the next one who apply this findings into their project work on domestic violence in rural Pattani as well. At first, they invited religious leaders and community leaders in the area to attend the training workshop, which facilitated shared vision and introduced the theory of change for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Some of them are fathers, brothers or husbands of women in the working team. These male leaders become alliance for change. While religious leaders began to teach more about roles and right duty in the family, the community leaders made an announcement to support the working team. It is the first time in Muslim culture that the family affecting the problem was visited by the assembly of women, religious leaders and community leaders. This kind of collective leadership encourages the victimized family and solves the problem more pragmatically. Another major by-product is renewal the atmosphere of trust and solidarity within the community, after the long period of mistrust because of the insecurity issues, which led to abundant deaths by bombs and assassinations.

Within Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA), the labor union has initiated initiatives to prevent and address sexual harassment in the organization. Then, the program persuaded the chief executive to work with the unions through the training workshop activity. Unlike other issues, after the

management level understand the concept, they can work with the unions without conflicts. The progress of work is quite rapid. BMTA is the first organization that declared corporate policies and guidelines on prevention and resolution of sexual harassment. Related training manual and workshop for new recruitments are developed. After the cabinet resolution on June 26, 2015, government agencies have to take the sexual harassment measurement in the workplace. BMTA turns out to be the learning platforms of this issue for others. It is still the only one large organization with strong commitment with this subject.

In the case of training workshop for female inquiry officers and Hospital's OSCCs, the project manager is the middle level executive, whose authorities allow decisions making in a specific policy level, and still depend on the upper level management level. Challenge is to convince both superior bosses and inferior agency chiefs, who would support their personnel, how the training could benefit the staffs and organization image.

However, too much dependency of policy's makers has a weakness as well. The BMTA case reflects this flaw quite good. Recently, the new leaders of labor unions and the new chief executive team want to replace some of project working members with their own personnel. Even though they are people who initiated the work. The prevention and resolution of sexual harassment in the workplace project was restrained because of the political change in the organization, despite the fact that it is the national best practice.

Similar situations could be found in other projects with different degrees. Another case is the unintended pregnancy matter within farmer community in Amnat Charoen Province. After the former sheriff, who understood and supported the working team, was moved to other place. The core group consisting of parents of unintended pregnancy children, whose attempt is to prevent and solve this problem, has to bring a flower basket to the new sheriff and inform about their previous works. One more case is the unintended pregnancy issue in Songkhla. Once the medical lecturer, who gave support to the working team, decided to move to Bangkok for study purpose, the project work related with pregnancy termination was moderate, because he was the only one medical doctor in the province, who conducted the abortion for people in need.

Success Factor 4: Using of various dialogues to develop perception/participation among communities' members/organizations about gender equality.

To introduce new concepts and idea to community, topics of conversation could challenge traditional belief of men and others. Using of dialogues tools provide participation process for every stakeholders.

Although collaboration with policy's makers enable achievement faster, but sustainability could become another concern. Hence, participation from all interested party is required. The working team tried to develop conversations subsequently using various tools such as continuous dialogue group and mass communication.

Hmong women group conduct dialogue group constantly, to heal suffered women. Parents in Amnat Charoen facilitate dialogues among parents and youth for listening to opinions and youth sexual experiences in every villages. At the same time, mass media for change are produced. For examples: Hmong women created clip video about ritual that welcome divorced daughters back to her family, with supportive announcement of spiritual leaders in communities. It is distributed in Hmong language to Hmong communities in many provinces. Additionally, other activities are communicated via facebook in Hmong language. Homehug group, which is consisted of parents and youth, conducted evening radio programs for communities. Conversations topics like reproductive health, birth control and sexual organ caring, provoked disagreement from community leaders. The working team of unintended preganancy in Songkhla used mobile cars with loudspeakers to promote the issue in open market and tradition ceremonies. Large plate in front of health service unit said that people affected with unintended pregnancy are welcome. Stickers with contact information for consultation were everywhere in the village. These are innovative communication tools in Songkhla.

Furthermore, the Feminist Participatory Action Research (FEMPAR) are introduced and promoted among the working project teams, communities and organizations. Apart from situation analysis and resolution developments, FEMPAR turns out to be important empowerment tool for researchers (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Williams & Lykes, 2003). Women and other sexual oppressors could have more self-confidences and gather into group for negotiation with unfair structure and institutions. They solve problems by themselves and breakthrough the wall of biases and learning disability of people with more authorities. Transformation of cultural obstacles into learning process provide understanding for communities and organizations that women's problems

belongs to communities and organizations too. As long as women suffer, men are unhappy as well, because women are their daughters, their mothers, their wives and theirs sisters.

Hmong women group called their project as research project and invited others to "conduct research together". Therefore, more engagements were provided. In Songkhla, FEMPAR is implemented in a district hospital. It is founded that bias and labeling people affected with unintended pregnancy were from both villager and health service officers. That's why the health service with gender sensitivity is developed and implemented to provide more choices for people in need.

Moreover, public seminar is another communication tool recommended by the program. Every projects organized public seminars in almost every levels such as community, district and province. In seminars, leaders and policy's decision makers were informed and expressed their opinions to the projects works. By scaling up perception and participation through information and conversations, network of alliances are expanded. For examples: The district hospital in Amnat Charoen connected parents, who are active with unintended pregnancy issue, with civil society in the province. As well, district hospital and some TMPHs in Songkhla begins to implement and apply the health service for people affected with unintended pregnancy.

Besides, journalists were invited to participate public seminar of larger projects. Addressing and prevention of sexual harassment within BMTA and among female police officers gained extra interest from the press. Hmong culture's issue was new and unusual for them as well. New media topics expand conversations space about gender equality in the society. News, which are publicly distributed, come back to organizational and community leaders in positive way. As a result, project works receive more support from them.

Success Factor 5: The purpose of change remain connected from individual and family level to community/organization/society level.

The main theme and core value of the program is the "women wellbeing", which means that women happiness or positive life experiences in 4 dimensions: physical, emotional, social and spiritual health, are connected, balanced and holistic. It is related with and result of gender and sexual justice, which is the society that support everybody to access all social/economical/political opportunities/ services/benefits equally and just. Their basic right and freedom are guaranteed and protected. Negligence, exclusion and discrimination because of gender and sexuality are inacceptable.

Every projects supported by the program are designed for capability building and strengthening purposes. Staffs and working team are provided opportunities to become change agents, who could create social innovation based on their works. Dr. Varaporn Chamsanit, the program manager described that "To make a change towards gender justice, women must have strength within themselves and make a change by themselves. Inequality could disappear, only when the problem's owners fight against it. They could have alliances, but the advantaged people never initiate the change. People who affected by the problem, in this case are women. To make a change, women has to change herself first, before changing external structure. Changing of mental model is hard work. It takes time. Output is qualitative, not quantitative. Priority change begins with attitude, not with the system. It is software, not hardware." (Interview, 5 February 2016)

By evaluation at the end of the program, findings are 3 behavioral changes of all grantees.

The first one is that they take care their body, mind and spirituality better. Their power-within increases. Meditation is an essential tool to cultivate mindfulness, attention and inner security. Many of them have more courage to face more challenges. More often, awareness and self-reflection are practiced. More self-understanding, as the result of family and society's factors, could liberate themselves from patriarchal culture and gender injustice within Thai society. More justice sensitivity provides sharper equity lens, which could detect inequity and injustice issues more.

Secondly, relationship with other and working style are changed as well. Implementation of heartfelt listening and nonviolent communication in real life nourish better relationship with close one, colleagues and service clients. Power-with culture is applied to working with co-workers and service clients too.

The last one is change of social attitude and working purpose. They can link their actual work to gender inequality and social injustice. Therefore, the new purpose is working towards a just society. Seeking alliances enables more working in team or networks. Many of them said that they felt more joyful and hopeful, additionally, they were never disheartened and tiresome as previous time.

By the police case, after senior female police officers already organized the training workshop for the graduated female cadets, they established the female inquiry officers club with the purpose to change working structure within the National Police Office, which supports the protection of children and women.

In Pattani, after working in community level achieved, scaling up to province level is implemented. The Provincial Islam Commission are asked to review religious rules, which could applied to prevent and resolve domestic violence issues.

Besides in Songkhla, the next milestone is upgrading of friendly and equity health service for people affected with unintended pregnancy to provincial level.

In the previous ten years, women wellbeing and gender justice movement in Thailand become new independent movement (Buranajaroenkij, 2017), which proposed various intersectional topics such as cultural change, new education, political participation as active citizen, environment and ecosystem protection, animal protection, spiritual development towards new consciousness, women and sexual diversity as human right. However, to accomplish the goal, there is still a long way.

Normally, women and gender matters are marginalized in every social working contexts. In the beginning, each project has to face with both internal struggles and shortage of external support. Because most of working staffs are female and newcomers of project management, they lack essential skills such as project proposal development, project administration, teamwork and working result report writing. Moreover, confrontation always occurs after interfering with sensitive sexual issues, which were hidden undisturbed in Thai society for a long time.

Nevertheless, working with marginalized topics has some advantages. Staffs have freedom to design and try in working area, which has less control and rules. New order could emerge from this chaos situations to handle with the unknown future.

Although the Women Wellbeing and Gender Equality Program granted only projects for period of 6 – 24 months, whose outputs were limited by scope of work, but subsequently funding for the new projects increased output both quantitative and qualitative. In addition to budget support, knowledge, administrative skill and working process design are provided as well. Other empowerment and learning tools are project monitoring and evaluation, participatory lesson learned, new project development based on former works and involvement of all stakeholders.

Under the umbrella of the program, with shared vision of women wellbeing in just society with more gender equality and missions of policy and structural changes, all intermediary outputs of various projects were linked with long term outputs of the program. To assure above logical framework, the empowerment and result-based monitoring and evaluation are implemented within the program. This tool support working staffs to achieve their objectives both in short and long term, expand alliances network, increase knowledge and collect small success in each steps as further

working resources for the next milestones. Working staffs could avoid the trap of project working, which focuses only activities accomplishment and forget the long term objectives.

Conclusion

Those five factors, based on gender equality work with gender based violence and unintended pregnancy problems in Thai society, are introduced as crucial success features, which could apply to other women related issues.

In the beginning, starting from problems owners and empathized supporters is highlighted. After that, working team is empowered with new paradigm of women wellbeing and gender equality. As well, the concept of individual happiness, which interconnects with social justice, provides deep understanding with ourselves, social complexity and other stakeholders. Expanded collaboration, which involves advantaged group or privilege class through public communication tools, opens more space for possible future and changes. Lastly, intersectoral and intersectional working could be strengthen.

Change as the result of work progress could be classified into 5 levels as following:

1st Level: Emerging of new knowledge, especially experiences based understanding and shared vision for change between working team and target group.

2nd Level: More individuals or group with more information, knowledge, paradigm and basic skilled for working towards gender equality and social justice.

3rd Level: Existence of strengthening teamwork capable of working for change.

4th Level: Presence of system and working mechanism to produce and increase more drivers for create or improve community rules/operation procedures.

5th Level: Incidence of supportive social atmosphere, which is aware of importance of gender equality and social justice, and existence of widely working participation.

All of these have the same goals, which are making a change toward happiness an justice, healing and liberating the oppressed, empowering them and working together for me, for you, for us and for all of us in the society.

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