



CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: TAF'S DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE PROGRAM

This chapter, analyzing the contribution of TAF's DDP to Peacebuilding and Development in southern Thailand, will begin with an introduction to TAF in section 4.1. TAF's work specifically in the deep south of Thailand will be highlighted in section 4.2, whereas section 4.3 will introduce and specifically focus on its DDP. Finally, in section 4.4, TAF's contribution to Development and Peacebuilding will be explored through its contribution to process and structure oriented outcomes.

4.1 TAF in Thailand

Founded in 1950, with its headquarters still in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation is a non-profit non-governmental organization that currently works on a variety of issues in seventeen different countries in Asia that reflect its mission statement and commitment to “the development of a *peaceful, prosperous, just and open* Asia Pacific region” (TAF 2011, emphasis added).

The history of TAF and its work in Thailand has developed significantly since its initial inception. This will be explored in more depth through the example of its work in the deep south, however also the development of its funding shows the an increasing awareness and desired accountability for the purpose and intention of its work. In its early founding years, TAF was largely reliant on CIA funding, since the 1960s, however, TAF moved away from CIA financing, and since then has become more selective in its criteria of funding, even turning down USAID funding for projects when they might risk limiting the freedom of management with which TAF works and enjoys. Although TAF still heavily relies on US Government funding through “core contributions and specific project grants from USAID as well as other parts of the US Government” (Burke, 2011: 205); with a current annual global budget of slightly over 150million US dollars. TAF also receives funding through a range of individual donors, private corporations, foundations, and organizations, as well as government and multilateral institutions (TAF 2010a).

Although today TAF has several nationwide programs in Thailand that support ‘civic participation’, ‘political development’, and ‘alleviating economic hardship’, their attention and efforts in contributing to Peacebuilding in southern Thailand is of special emphasis for TAF. This can be seen in their map that identifies Thailand as a “peaceful” mission, and its activity there described as “actively involved in conflict management and peacebuilding efforts between minority populations and central government authorities” (TAF 2011).

In terms of TAF’s approach to Peacebuilding throughout Asia, TAF states that it seeks to address the grievances of the conflicted population and support local efforts to better articulate their grievances and aspirations (TAF 2010). TAF’s “Conflict Mitigation in the Deep South” is an example of this. In addition to nationwide programs, “Conflict Mitigation in the Deep South” has many sub-programs that constitute a range of activities that focus on “Safeguarding Cultural Identity”, “Promoting Local Language”, “Improving Access to Justice”, and “Facilitating Peace Plans”. TAF states that it seeks to address ‘drivers of the conflict’ in the deep south of Thailand. This is significant as TAF specifically identifies education, economic opportunity, identity, and participation in local decision-making as factors through which peaceful development can emerge in southern Thailand.

4.2 TAF in the Deep South

TAF began working in Thailand just four years after its founding, and by 1961 already had a special focus in southern Thailand, on the issue of education in the deep south. What first began, more than fifty years ago, as a social welfare program for a bilingual education program, evolved into a more comprehensive reform of private Islamic schools (‘pondok’) in order to strengthen their secular curriculum in the subjects of English, science, and social science throughout secondary schools and high schools in the region.¹ Even before the recent violence began, in 2003 TAF was already responding to the need to improve the quality of education of private religious

¹ Interview conducted with Ruengrawee Pichaikul, Senior Program Coordinator, TAF, Pattani, 19 June 2011.

schools, whose students were at a systemic disadvantage in seeking further life and economic opportunities, since upon graduating high school, most students were not academically prepared or able to attend university. TAF saw this as an important pattern to break.

In what can be considered its next phase in programming in the deep south, in February of 2004, TAF began a political literacy program, entitled Civic Participation Local Government (CPLG). The purpose of this program was for locals to understand local political structures and dynamics, so as to be able to create space for local voice. The second tier of this program included an academic investigation by King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI) into the root causes of the conflict. This is significant as it represents a core and ongoing interest, investigation, and awareness raising as to the local needs and desires of the people of the deep south.

During this same time period, in response to hundreds of people in the deep south being accused of being linked with insurgent groups, TAF also started to develop its Access to Justice Program. It helped lawyers' expenses and court fees, so that these people could be represented in court. In addition, because of the situation where seventeen lawyers were handling over two hundred cases, TAF also trained locals to work as paralegals, what came to be known as SPAN, the Southern Paralegal Advocacy Network. It also supported the work of local CSOs Women and Peace Group and the Pattani Community Radio Network.

This phase, more fully transitioned TAF's developmental approach from welfare based programs to advocacy oriented and rights and justice based developmental approach. Moreover, working with local people and CSOs and providing the training and support so that they can protect their own rights was a big step in the direction of the 'transformative peace' and development to which TAF aspires. In an interview with a senior program coordinator, she explained this 'transformative peace' as one where development is aimed toward 'empowerment for articulation and realization'².

² Interview conducted with Ruengrawee Pichaikul, Senior Program Coordinator, TAF, Pattani, 19 June 2011.

In addition to TAF's peacebuilding efforts being geared specifically "between minority groups and the government authorities" (TAF 2011) (essentially a structurally oriented endeavor, in an attempt to address the 'core of the conflict') and the belief that addressing issues of cultural identity, local language, and access to justice will help to address the drivers of the conflict (TAF 2010) (or the proxy causes and grievances that perpetuate violence), TAF also believes that providing a platform for the many 'unheard voices' of the people of the deep south to be heard both amongst each other, between polarized groups, and by the appropriate central government officials is one way to provide a 'legitimate' and perhaps more moderate 'middle voice' (as opposed to the range of opinions that are markedly set by the central government on one side, and the 'insurgents' or opposition groups on the other)³. One way that TAF contributes and supports these voices is through the support of local CSOs and joint programs that support and strengthen local media capacity with partners such as Aman News Agency, Pattani Community Radio, and Southern Peace Media Volunteer Network. Additionally, TAF conducts surveys and supports public debate, a topic which will be explored at depth in the following sections.

4.3 TAF and its DDP

Although TAF historically and currently has many programs under the umbrella of its "Conflict Mitigation in the Deep South", this thesis will focus on the most recent sub-program. 'Facilitating Peace Plans' in essence is a result of years of working on issues of cultural identity, local language, and access to justice that have resulted in relationships with local civil society organizations (CSOs) that have enabled a partnership of local CSO partners to take a leading role in facilitating dialogues within their community. This program also reflects the continued effort of TAF to understand local perceptions and issues of concern to locals in the southern three provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala. Previous work that can be

³ Interview conducted with Tom Parks, TAF, Regional Director for Governance and Conflict, Bangkok, 14 June 2011.

understood to have led up to the development of this program is TAF's survey of the Thai electorate in these southern three provinces (TAF, 2010).

The process of TAF's DDP can be understood to have had two phases thus far. The first was called the 'naming and framing' phase, where in March of 2011 TAF's ten local CSO partners⁴ held over fifty forums throughout the three southern border provinces, asking what were the most important concerns of the local people. TAF provided training to the CSO coordinators who conducted these dialogues. The target participants of these forums were, essentially, as many participants and voices as possible, an attempt to capture the myriad of voices and opinions in the deep south. After the first session of forums were complete, TAF systematically compiled the information and produced 'Asia Books' (essentially information booklets) on the top four issues that were most highly prioritized by all attendees of the first exploratory dialogues; personal safety and security, drugs, education, and the justice system were identified as those most concerning issues. In the second phase of this project, the information booklets on the issues identified were used as a starting point for discussing and 'thinking together' about the various potential ways of addressing each issue. The target audience varied here, as TAF and CSOs sought to invite prevalent participants for each issue based dialogue (ie. if the issue for discussion was education, podok owners, teachers, parents of students, governmental school employees were especially targeted for attendance, in addition to other locals who were interested)⁵.

Looking forward, into the two projected phases of this program beyond the dialogues themselves, TAF sees a third phase as small seed grant phase whereby local people and or local CSOs help to coordinate projects and efforts that respond to the community conclusions and desire to address these community issues. Further and finally, the fourth and final stage projected for this program is a forum with the central

⁴ Aman News Agency; Center of Culture Protection for Democracy- Southern Thailand; Civil Society Network Narathiwat; Islamic Cultural Center for Development; Graduate Network for Development of Southern Thailand; Southern Paralegal Network; Pattani Community Radio; Southern Peace Media Volunteer Network; Student Federation of Southern Thailand; Women and Peace Group.

⁵ The issue of who was invited and who attended will be further developed in section 4.4.

government, whereby the ideas, issues, problems, and potential avenues forward are heard by and discussed with government officials.

The observation research took place during the second phase of dialogue forums, which are the forums that will be used specifically in the process-oriented analysis that draws heavily on observations of these dialogues. Specifically the forums of the Islamic Cultural Center for Development; Aman News Agency; and Women and Peace Group were observed⁶.

4.4 Analyzing Process and Structure Oriented Outcomes for Development and Peacebuilding

In seeking to understand how TAF's DDP can be understood as contributing to Development and Peacebuilding in southern Thailand, it must be recognized that successful contributions to Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding "[encourage] *interaction and understanding between formerly hostile local communities* and [involve] *awareness raising and empowerment within those communities*," (Austin et al., 2004: 466). 'Interaction and understanding between formerly hostile local communities' represents the first level of analysis that takes into consideration the process-oriented outcomes of Peacebuilding. In measuring the success of TAF's contribution to the process-oriented outcomes of Peacebuilding through its DDP, the first level of analysis will analyze the extent to which TAF's DDP fulfills the role of the dialogue projects for Conflict Transformations identified by Ropers (2004). This level of analysis will concentrate on the first two imperatives identified- '**practising communication and interaction skills**' and '**providing opportunity for encounter and learning between polarized groups**'- which can both be considered process-oriented outcomes of dialogue projects. The third and final outcome identified for fulfilling dialogue projects for Conflict Transformation- '**empowering groups**'- can be considered categorically structure-oriented (Ropers, 2004: 264). In this way, this analysis considers roles that relate to both Peacebuilding (in a process and structurally

⁶ Further information with regard to the location and date of these interviews can be found in Appendix.

oriented sense) and Development (via empowerment), specifically in the context of dialogue projects seeking Conflict Transformation.

First, in terms of '**practicing communication and interaction skills**', the role of the dialogue program was achieved, as the attendees fundamentally practiced communication and interactions skills through their participation in the DD forum. However, of course, there were some observed limitations. Mainly with the level of communication and interaction practiced by all the attendees. Although in the Women and Peace Group's forum there were a lot of women in attendance (essentially a 2:1 ratio), the men took the majority of the speaking time. In the Islamic Cultural Center for Development, on the other hand, there were all young Muslim men in attendance, however a similar pattern of the few same voices throughout the forum was also observed. In a third DD observed, the Aman News Agency pursued a different strategy. Here, the attendees separated into three smaller groups (men with men, women with women) this enabled the women to have equal communication opportunities, when all groups presented their ideas at the end of the deliberation. Although in this situation interaction between all attendees was limited in a sense, seeing as the deliberation period per each group was gender specific and restricted to a smaller group of discussion and interaction, this tradeoff also resulted in the increased participation of the actual communication of ideas from a larger sample of the attendees.

This practicing of interaction and communication skills is especially of importance in the setting of violent conflict, as the mere practicing of non-violent communication and interaction is a step in the right direction. In fact it is even considered that likely "the most important contribution which the dialogue approach can make to peace constituencies or peace alliances is that of generally *promoting a dialogue-based dispute culture*" (Ropers, 2004). Further, when considering the argument of Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw's (2002) 'self-reinforcing model of Deliberative Dialogue', the characteristics of TAF's DDP is encouraging. In this 'self-reinforcing model of Deliberative Dialogue', the authors contend that if there is a 1) perceived appropriateness of deliberation, 2) perception of potential common ground,

3) analytical and communication skills, and 3) motivation to deliberate that these then feedback into 1) reinforcing deliberative habits, 2) changing self-conceptions, 3) building knowledge and competence, and 4) reinforcing political efficacy. Therefore, the habit forming potential of communication and interaction through TAF's DDP is also meaningful for promoting a 'dialogue-based dispute culture'.

More than just providing a place for the practice, and perhaps even normalization of, 'communication and interaction skills', a second role of dialogue projects for Conflict Transformations is identified as '**providing opportunities for encounter and learning between polarized groups**'. In this analysis both horizontal and vertical encounters and learning are considered. These encounters depended on the participants invited to attend, as well as those who actually attended. This, in turn, depended on the local CSO's capacity to organize the DDs. Some CSOs invited village elders and police/military members, but none came. This may depend on when they scheduled the meeting as well as the CSO's ability to interface with these actors, and additionally the local context of the opportunity structure to interact with these desired potential attendees. Additionally, the factor of the intention of the CSO must be taken into account. Some CSOs intentionally invited more like-minded/similar groups of people (they tended to be minorities: youth, women, more extreme opinioned people), hoping together they would speak more openly in that context, and also as it was explained by one CSO organizer so that the sample taken from the DDP, in general, would also include these voices and opinions, that might have otherwise not been heard.

In terms of the DD observed, the Women and Peace Group, as stated, had a high attendance of women, however police officers, military, and religious leader men were also in a high proportion of male attendance. This mixture of attendees broadens the spectrum of horizontal and vertical encounters and learning to include civilians and government officials, rather than purely civilians, which would be representative of solely horizontal encounters. This not only provided opportunity for vertical encounter between polarized group, but also learning was a central theme: not only through the Asia Book's information, but through the exchange of personal

experiences and knowledge about laws and rights and what *should* happen. In a particularly moving moment in the dialogue, one woman shared of her experience of the 'return' of her brother after having been arrested. She spoke of the difficulties that indefinitely change family lives and dynamics that she felt were not being considered when, in her opinion, police and military too hastily arrests men without evidence. To this a police officer responded, stating the rights of a person in the event of an arrest, and the need for a warrant. He explained the process that should, and what he believed 'usually does', happen. Further, he informed her of who specifically to call in the event of what appears to be an unjust arrest. In a follow up interview with this police officer, he shared how moving that was for him, and how he learned a lot about the consequences that go beyond what he is exposed to in terms of local people's lives. This exchange, exemplified the learning and encounters between polarized groups towards which process-oriented approaches aspire, as the result can help to expand knowledge of 'the other' and help to improve understanding, and change attitudes between and among polarized groups.

However, this was not the case for all DD, as observations and interviews with TAF staff revealed that this was largely dependent of the given CSO. For example, in another DD observed, only young Muslim Malay men were in attendance. In this way the encounter and learning between polarized groups was not achieved, in either a horizontal or vertical sense, although discussion for plans of how to connect and interact between the military and villagers was a large topic of discussion. This is, however, not to say that the gathering of groups within each pole is without benefit. One tradeoff to providing an opportunity for encounter and learning between polarized groups, as opposed to within, is that these young men were able to learn and expand their knowledge through open discussion based off of the dissemination of an unbiased source of broad and factually informed information. In this, context opportunities for encounter and learning *within* polarized groups can also be of benefit, perhaps as a precursor to encounters and learning between polarized groups.

Although, by large, these DDs observed lacked vertical encounters and learning, it is worth noting that one end point sought out by TAF for its DDP is to

present the outcomes and conclusion of ideas and opinions of these series of forums to the central government. If realized, this would serve as an example of an opportunity created for a vertical encounter and potential for learning, among the primarily horizontal encounters that are most characteristic of the current dialogues. Additionally, when analyzing the outcome orientation of TAF's DDP, this outcome could move in the direction of a results-oriented approach. This goal continues to correspond with the ongoing objective of TAF to address the policies of the central government with respect to the Muslim Malays (a national minority group) of the deep south. Local people and CSOs addressing the central government, advocating for reform as well as justice and their rights to be realized, could also be seen as a force in the support and advocacy for structural changes, the topic of discussion in the next indicator that deals specifically with the issue of empowering groups.

Finally in terms of '**empowering groups**' there are two separate groups to be considered in analyzing the contribution of TAF's DDP to Development (via empowerment) and Peacebuilding (via structure-oriented transformation). The first group under consideration is that of the empowerment of the local CSOs in the expansion of agency (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007 cited in Samman and Santos, 2009: 5), or the expansion of assets and capabilities to "participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Samman and Santos, 2009: 11), and the second is the attendees of the deliberative dialogue forums.

Because analyzing 'empowerment' seeks to consider specifically the agency or process freedoms—"what a person is free to do or achieve in pursuit of whatever goal or values he or she regards as important" (Sen, 1985: 203), rather than the opportunity structure (or in Sen's terms opportunity freedoms- "the various combinations of beings and doings a person can achieve" (Sen 1992: 40)); the analysis of empowerment is not dependent on whether these structural changes were achieved in this period of time, but rather on the agency of the actions pursued. Since TAF's DDP was specifically a response to what issues the people of the deep south

regard as important, the agency in terms of the intention and conception of the project is more representative of local desires and concerns than that of TAF.

Although TAF's DDP helped to expand the capabilities of local attendees of the forums 'to participate in, and toward attempting to influence and control and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives' through organizing at a local level to address local concerns, perhaps the group whose empowerment was most meaningful for the Peacebuilding was the local CSOs who, through TAF and its DDP, developed capacities to collectively organize and facilitate dialogue.

Narayan (2002) cites that information, participation and inclusion, accountability, and local organizational capacity are four indicators that can be linked with increased agency, thus empowerment. In terms of the two groups being considered, increased information and participation and inclusion is most representative to the indicators that relate to the empowerment sought the part of the local attendees, whereas it could be argued that accountability and local organizational capacity are the indicators that are most representative of the increase in agency that the local CSOs experienced.

For the local attendees the end point of this discussion may have very well ended at the discussion and resulted in no action, at least on their part. However, even if this was the case, these individuals still participated and were included in this discussion. The act of voicing or having one's voice heard is an initial step toward realizing outcomes from it. Moreover, these participants also potentially benefited from the access to information, provided by both the CSO, through the Asia Books, and other local attendees. This, together with their participation and inclusion, seemed to encompass the areas through which empowerment was most prevalent for this group, given the indicators.

Accountability and local organizational capacity were the indicators that were most representative of what was gained for the local CSOs facilitating these dialogues. They, on the other hand, *were* responsible for making sure that these voices

were heard, and that it was followed through with, if not action on their part, proper documentation at the very least. These CSOs were the ones who facilitated the former group's 'empowerment' through the selection of attendees- who would be included and who would participate- and through the information they provided on their part. Further, in an interview with an TAF senior coordinator, she stressed the importance of ownership of these issues, this is something that was seen to some degree with the attendees- a sense that there were local improvements that could be made on their part and that these issues were theirs to discuss; however, by in large, the issue of accountability for future action and ownership of this cause, these dialogues, lied more prominently in the hands of the local CSOs.

The second indicator, local organizational capacity, is arguably one of the most significant results of this program. Through the interviews with these local CSOs who participated in TAF's DDP (and even other local CSOs), it was evident that the support, both financial and technical, from TAF (or other development donors in the region) allowed for the growth and development of these individual organizations, the strengthening of their capacities to organize, that also helped the furthering of their own individual projects and causes in the deep south.

The expansion of agency, by both local attendees and local CSOs, was met with the expansion of opportunities through the fora of the Deliberative Dialogues. However, the expansion of opportunities in a structural sense will require much more than talking locally, and even perhaps more than the presentation of the opinions of locals to the government. In this way, the development of a strong base of CSO that are accountable and have a sense of ownership of these local concerns is of particular value in terms of the contribution of TAF's DDP to Peacebuilding in southern Thailand. Eventually, a result-oriented outcome will be necessarily, however until then there is use in building up local support for structural changes, and in working with local communities in solving community issues together.