

Child Rights in Thai Schools: Participatory Learning Processes

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The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a product of the United Nations' (UN) painstaking negotiations with governments for 10 years starting in 1979. The UN General Assembly adopted the CRC in 1989. While preserving the spirit of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the CRC reflected issues and concerns that emerged during the past 30 years, such as environmental protection, drug abuse, and sexual exploitation. CRC entered into force on 2 September 1990. Of 194 UN Member-States, 192 ratified the CRC. It was ratified by Thailand on 12 February 1990 and entered into force on 26 April 1992.

In June 1994 the Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development and Radda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children) organized a workshop on the CRC in Chiangmai, Thailand. The workshop brought together participants from South and Southeast Asia plus delegates from five country offices of three International Save the Children Alliance (ISCA) organizations.

The workshop discussed the need for a training package on how to use the CRC. The training package should therefore include important provisions of the CRC and be flexible enough to be applied in the region's different socio-cultural environments.

ISCA members in Asia convened a second workshop in Bangkok in September 1994 to develop the training package. ISCA published a manual, *Promoting the Rights of the Child*, in 1994.

In 1998 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-Thailand, with technical assistance from Kim Martens, developed a manual, *Whose Rights? A Training Manual for Awareness Raising on Child Rights*. It includes 1-day participatory learning "whole school-community" CRC sensitization workshops. The manual is

an adaptation of the original English-language version of *Whose Rights? A Child's* by Kim Martens, published in 1994 by UNICEF-Bangladesh and Radda Barnen. Sections of the manual were derived from the ISCA-Asia training package, *Promoting the Rights of the Child*, and the work of Susan Fountain and Graeme Storer. The Institute of Population and Social Studies in Mahidol University, Thailand provided technical assistance to develop the manual.

In November 1998 the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) launched the Thailand Child-Friendly Schools Program (TCFSP) in 23 primary and secondary schools in six provinces. The pilot program implemented the "total school-system approach for learning" by creating concrete examples of rights-based child-friendly schools that promote quality learning outcomes, physical and mental health, and development of essential life skills. The program builds on and incorporates lessons learned from pilot projects supported by UNICEF and collaborating partners, including Save the Children-US (SC/US), The Life Skills Development Foundation (TLSDF), Mahidol University Institute for Nutrition Re-

search, and The Art and Cultural Institute for Development. Funding for the program is provided by United Nation Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), SC/US, the government, and Johnson & Johnson Inc.

Based on the success of using participatory needs assessment and planning in its pilot project in 28 primary schools in Nakhon Sawan province, SC/US proposed participatory school-self assessment (SSA) and improvement planning as a key strategy to design the Child-Friendly Schools Program. SC/US requested that UNICEF-Thailand invite John MacBeath from the Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde, Scotland, to provide technical assistance on SSA. In May Mr. MacBeath and Mr. David Nicol visited several Thai primary schools and conducted a 1-day seminar for ONPEC on participatory learning and SSA. Subsequently, ONPEC supported self-assessment as a component of the TCFSP design.

James Hopkins (SC/US) and Kriengkrai Chaimuangdee (TLSDF) adapted their original participatory schoolchild needs assessment method by incorporating ideas from Mr. MacBeath's research, checklist items from UNICEF's *Implementation Handbook for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the World Health Organization (WHO) checklist for child-friendly schools to develop a methodology for participatory child rights sensitization and SSA of child-friendly learning conditions. This process was tested and refined in three schools in Nakhon Sawan with funding by SC/US.

The Life Skills Development Foundation

TLSDf, a legally registered, nongovernmental organization (NGO) based in northern Thailand, was started by Save the Children USA in 1998. The foundation's main objective is to provide life-skill education and training for children, youth, women, and families, based on the

CRC. TLSDf initiates and develops program models, including the following:

- school self-assessment: a system for school self-assessment of child friendliness;
- a model for kindergarten basic life skills and hygiene education program;
- integration of life skills into the school curriculum;
- a school-community-based approach to promoting health according to the specific health needs of school and local community;
- a school-based approach to community action against malaria as a key strategy to enhance knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavior against malaria in highly endemic border areas;
- a school-community-based approach to prevent substance abuse and reproductive health risk behaviors in students; and
- a child-friendly community-school approach to promote health, psychosocial development, and resilience in children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS.

Training and Implementation

In February 1999 SC/US and TLSDf provided technical assistance to ONPEC in training school administrators and provincial and district supervisors from all 23 initial pilot program schools in SSA. Hands-on training was conducted by implementing a participatory child-rights sensitization workshop and SSA in Sri Bua Ban School (Lamphun province). Subsequently, the remaining 19 schools in six provinces conducted SSA and developed school improvement plans or school charters for all the initial 23 TCFSP pilot model schools.

From November 1999 to January 2000 SC/US and TLSDf surveyed participants—students, parents, teachers, supervisors, and school administrators—involved in implementing SSA and school improvement planning to evaluate the implementation of CRC sensitization workshops, SSA, and the school improvement planning process.

In a seminar to review the survey results, representative survey participants from the initial six provinces with pilot model schools reviewed the results of the evaluation of the workshops, identified constraints on the promotion and protection of child rights, and suggested ways to refine and develop strategies and methods.

The following summarizes the results of the seminar and includes in-depth analysis by James Hopkins of SC/US and Kreangkrai Chai-muangdee of TLSDF.

Aim of Child-Rights Sensitization Training Process

Adult participants used *Whose Rights? A Training Manual for Awareness Raising on Child Rights* to connect significant lingering positive and negative memories of childhood. A main aim was to elicit empathic feelings for children whose rights have been violated or unfulfilled. The approach focused more on laying a foundation for adult commitment to safeguard child rights by using experiential (heart) exercises, while building links with less emphasized theoretical (head) foundations of the concept of child rights. SC/US and TLSDF adapted activities from the manual and developed new activities to elicit pupils' perceptions of happiness and suffering and to facilitate pupils' ability to relate child-rights issues to the central role of the schools.

Activities and awareness raising on child rights

Awareness-raising training on child rights is one of the most important processes conducted in SSA. The main objectives of this process are

- to increase awareness of and understanding of CRC principles,
- to help participants acknowledge and value the importance of special protection in childhood, and
- to motivate and facilitate the creation of a child-rights-based school program.

School Self-Assessment Process

1. Child rights sensitization training process
↓
2. "Dream school" camp
↓
3. Creation of internal criteria and study of external criteria
↓
4. School self-evaluation
↓
5. Study tour to example schools
↓
6. Analysis of the study tour and results from school self-evaluation
↓
7. School's self-development plan

The child-rights awareness-raising process has 11 activities. Using a questionnaire, school administrators, provincial and district education supervisors, and the activity organizers assessed these activities. The average marks for each activity are in the table (Table 1).

This table illustrates that eight activities (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) received an average score of above 4 as satisfactory results from more than 80% of respondents, while three activities (1, 3, 6) received an average score of below 4 as satisfactory results from more than 15% of the respondents.

These results were analyzed during a seminar on 18 January 2000. The reasons for the ineffectiveness of certain activities are the following:

- Activity materials and media, especially the pictures, are in black and white and difficult to understand.
- Participants were not informed of the activities' objectives before the activities. Participants could possibly not have understood what was required of them and gone through the activities incorrectly.

TABLE 1. Child rights activities and average marks

No.	Activities	Source of activities	Target of activities	Average marks
1.	I have something to tell you	Whose rights?	Adult group	3.8
2.	I spy with my little eyes	Whose rights?	Adult group	4.0
3.	Oh No! Not again!	Whose rights?	Adult group	3.9
4.	My rights	Whose rights?	Adult group	4.2
5.	Child rights: Wants and needs	Training manual of Save the Children (Asia)	Adult group Child group	4.2
6.	My rights are more important than yours	Whose rights?	Adult group	3.9
7.	Revisiting "I spy with my little eyes"	Whose rights?	Adult group	4.1
8.	Child rights in our school	Newly developed	Adult group	4.2
9.	The greatest happiness and the worst sadness	Newly developed	Child group	4.0
10.	What rights do we lack?	Newly developed	Child group	4.0
11.	My secret dream	Newly developed	Child group	4.4

- During the panel activities, parents and school committee members lacked confidence in expressing their opinions and, in most cases, were influenced by the ideas of the teacher-participants.
- Written and spoken languages were used during the activities. Written words often do not have the same meaning as when they are spoken. The language used by the trainer may have been too complicated for some participants to understand.
- The trainer did not sufficiently explain the scope and importance of child rights, possibly creating confusion.
- Children had limited participation as well as abilities. Their shyness and lack of confidence in telling the truth about themselves, or failure to remember other children's stories led to ineffective activities.
- Time for activities was limited.

One participant expressed the following opinion during the seminar, based on her experience in organizing activities on child rights:

At the beginning, when the activities' objectives were not yet understood, it was hard to imagine the outcome or the overall result. Therefore, some activities were taken off due to lack of understanding of the importance

of child rights activities. But as we came to understand the overall process of the activities we noticed that all were related and could not be excluded. Of greatest importance is the teachers' understanding, especially of the new teachers who did not attend the activities right from the beginning. These teachers needed to study and understand the activities clearly before undertaking them.

The activities with the children's group were satisfactory. All the children participated, therefore the possible reasons for the ineffectiveness of some activities could be

- insufficient understanding of child rights by the teachers (training facilitators), and
- lack of an overall understanding of the activities by the teachers (training facilitators) who therefore could not relate them to child rights.

All the 23 child-friendly schools organized activities on awareness raising on child rights. These activities provided an opportunity for those involved in SSA to share their opinions and be involved in discussion. However, the teachers who ran the activities lacked qualities needed to organize the activities. Only the educational supervisors and school administrators had this skill. The amount of time for aware-

ness raising on child rights was too short. Training workshops conducted by Kim Martens (2 days, 8 hours per day) and Save the Children (3 days, 8 hours per day) were far longer and more effective. The other reason for possible ineffectiveness of the activities is the lack of skills to organize activities in a learner-centered approach. Since these were designed to develop the learner’s behaviors and attitudes using active and participatory learning methods, the skills to apply them are necessary.

Lessons learned: Attitudes, values, and practices that impacted on understanding child rights

Participants in the seminar on developing methods for awareness raising on child rights and SSA were asked to complete a questionnaire: 15% did not understand or agree with 6 of 26 topics:

- Topic 1 A child is a person who is under 18 years of age.
- Topic 2 All pupils participate in school activities according to their interests.
- Topic 3 Pupils learn with happiness and without emphasizing competition (e.g., opportunities for music, arts, drama, etc.).
- Topic 4 There is no bullying in the school.
- Topic 5 There is no corporal punishment in the school.
- Topic 6 The school does not publicly rank pupils by performance results.

The content of analysis and discussion of each topic are as follows:

Article 1 of the CRC states, “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” Three suggestions from the seminar disagree with this provision:

- Thai children are those under 15 years of age because they are addressed as “mister” and “miss” when they receive their national identification card. In rural areas, children who get married at 15–16 years old are considered to be adults.
- Children over 14 years old should be referred to as “youths” instead.
- Children 13–15 years old are generally referred to as teenagers.

The participants were informed that the use of “mister” and “miss” after getting a national identification card is part of the Thai citizenship law and does not mean that the child is of legal age. In most cases, the parents must give permission for children aged 15–16 to marry.

The definition of a child in Thailand is influenced by many institutions. Juvenile Court System 1992 defines a child as over 7 years old but under 14. A youth is one over 14 but under 18.

Under criminal law, a child under 7 years who commits a crime shall not be punished. Youth refers to a person under 20 years of age and has not attained legal age (20 years) . This standard is used in civil law to determine the capacity of a child to act under the law.

The CRC allows each country to set the legal age of a child if the CRC’s definition con-

TOPIC 1. A child is a person who is under 18 years of age				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	88.89%	–	11.11%	–
Housewife	83.33%	16.67%	–	–
Community leader	78.26%	–	17.39%	4.35%
Teacher	61.90%	–	23.81%	14.29%
Education supervisor	50%	–	50%	–
School administrator	84.21%	–	15.79%	–
Total	74.43%	2.78%	19.68%	3.11%

flicts with the law of the country. But the main question is: Is the law of the country beneficial to or in the best interest of children?

The reasons why schools did not organize any interesting student activities included lack of financial support and staff. Some schools that organized activities claimed they were not successful because students were not interested but participated primarily to be with their friends.

During the seminar there was a suggestion to organize activities that are interesting for students using resource persons or instructors from outside the school and local areas. These people will be instrumental in

- organizing activities that the students will enthusiastically participate in;
- creating awareness among the teachers and the community that some activities do not need money at all, and thus reaffirming the importance of local instructors;
- surveying the students' learning needs and interests;
- creating a local resource persons list;
- encouraging activities that develop students' self-esteem and self-confidence; and
- developing a flexible thematic learning approach activity that can be done during classroom hours.

Most of the participants in the SSA agreed with implementation of programs that allow students to participate according to personal interest and in line with their abilities. Through

these programs they can fully develop themselves by using multiple-intelligence techniques that enhance enjoyment and attendance at school. However, organizing such activities is sometimes hampered, mainly by limited funds and lack of skilled people to conduct student-centered activities.

This reiterates the importance of developing and implementing activities based on students' interest. The CRC places great emphasis on children's participation rights. It seeks to provide children with a right to express their personal opinions on issues that directly affect them. Three articles in the CRC directly refer to children's rights to participation:

- *Article 12.* The "child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."
- *Article 13.* The right to freedom "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds." The right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary.
- *Article 15.* The right to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

The CRC's intention is to allow children the right to actively participate in making decisions and engaging activities. All schools should encourage it. Reports from many countries, how-

TOPIC 2. All pupils participate in school activities relevant to their own interest				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	88.89%	–	11.11%	–
Housewife	83.89%	–	5.56%	5.56%
Community leader		4.35%	8.70%	–
Teacher	86.96%	–	4.76%	–
Education supervisor	90.48%	–	–	4.76%
School administrator	75%	25%	5.26%	–
	84.21%	–	–	10.53%
Total	84.90%	4.89%	5.9%	3.47%

ever, indicate that the systems to promote it are developing very slowly.

Active participation by children enhances their ability to learn about values of democracy, human rights, and the daily routine in school. The school syllabus should emphasize improving students' responsibility to study and work. Teachers should create a democratic atmosphere by accepting students' participation. The school's mission is to teach students to understand and respect democracy. Student participation is the heart of the student-centered learning approach.

The teachers and housewives believe that competition creates a fun, active, and stimulating situation. They think that children like winning and getting prizes: "There is less harm in competition than in the student performance public ranking system." At the same time, however, the participants are informed that competition causes stress, selfishness, and friendship breakups, and could become a problematic habit when children mature.

During the seminar there was a suggestion to have an activity that enhances the understanding of this topic. Teachers should emphasize giving students support and encouragement rather than promoting competition at all levels of the educational system.

The CRC's intention is "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (Article 29[a]). The "right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate

freely in cultural life and the arts" (Article 31) is the right to development that involves all kinds of education (formal and nonformal). The right to have a living standard sufficient for the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development of a child is clearly provided. If the school teachers and administrators understood this, they would not emphasize only academic performance but would also support other kinds of development, especially art and culture. Respect for other cultures is important for a child in a world of globalization, is essential to prevent racism and xenophobia, and supports and develops creative thinking and imagination. Children can do activities without stress, competition, and worry about marks. Multiple-intelligence learning techniques that do not need competition should be employed. This does not mean that there should be no competition, but it should be determined by the objectives of the lesson.

Due to the misunderstanding about the word "threatening," which originally meant "threatening in a bullying way" (threat to do harm without any reason), many participants did not agree with this topic statement for several reasons. They thought that "children lack a sense of responsibility... (and therefore) some behavior needs threats to change." Many adults consider threats to be a useful and frequently used behavior-changing technique. A group of students mentioned that large boys usually use their physical power to threaten younger children.

It was suggested that understanding of the concept of rights in relation to the rights of oth-

TOPIC 3. Pupils learn with happiness, without emphasizing competition (e.g., opportunities for music, arts, drama, etc.)				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	77.78%	–	22.22%	–
Housewife	61.11%	–	38.89%	–
Community leader	86.95%	4.35%	8.70%	–
Teacher	85.71%	–	9.52%	4.8%
Education supervisor	100%	–	–	–
School administrator	89.5%	5.26%	5.26%	–
Total	83.5%	1.6%	14%	0.8%

TOPIC 4. There is no bullying in the school				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	83.33%	–	16.67%	–
Housewife	72.22%	–	16.67%	11.11%
Community leader				
Teacher	90.30%	–	8.70%	–
Education supervisor	80.95%	9.52%	4.76%	4.76%
School administrator	75%	25%	–	–
	89.47%	5.26%	5.26%	–
Total	82%	6.63%	8.67%	2.64%

ers must be increased. Children must know their rights and at the same time respect the rights of others. Teachers and students, students and students, students and their parents together, getting everyone to participate and share their opinions freely should make ground rules on this concept. Rules and punishment must be made because they are necessary to create order. Training in skills and knowledge about practical techniques on respecting rights of teachers and parents, as well as students, must be given.

Article 19 of the CRC provides that “States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.” Article 37[a] provides that “States Parties shall ensure that: No child shall be subjected to torture or other

cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

We can see that the CRC emphasizes preventing all kinds of violence against children, which is widespread inside and outside the school. A school policy to ensure the safety of students would enable them to enjoy their rights. The school must be supported in technical terms (creating strategies), and school management procedures. A school must be organized to stop all kinds of violence, and the learning process must emphasize the best interest of learners.

Some participants did not agree with this topic, saying that “a punishment can still be used within reason, with suitable method, and not against the law as punishment prevents children from misbehaving again.” “Physical punishment can still be found in Thai culture, therefore it should still be allowed in school as well, within the school rules, and whenever it is reasonable and suitable.”

TOPIC 5. There is no corporal punishment in the school				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	50%	–	44.44%	5.56%
Housewife	88.89%	–	5.56%	5.56%
Community leader				
Teacher	82.61%	–	8.70%	8.70%
Education supervisor	76.19%	–	9.52%	14.29%
School administrator	100%	–	–	–
	73.68%	–	10.53%	15.79%
Total	78.56%	–	13.12%	8.32%

During the seminar, one observed that “adults always think that their own ideas are always right.” Thai custom was pointed out as a reason for this. One suggestion is that punishment can be good but is double-edged and should be used carefully. Therefore, always consider the following:

- Individual differences. Teachers must draw out the abilities of students and let them do what they are good at. Rural children are different from those in the city. In meting out punishment, individual differences should be considered.
- Get to know students well and consider the reason for punishment, what wrong was done. Were they wrong because of a misunderstanding or does the teacher have a reason for it?
- If punishment cannot be avoided, its method must be decided upon by group agreement. Some of the participants observed that “only 15% of the participants do not agree with the idea of many people about changing child’s inappropriate behavior without using corporal punishment. This means now less people use corporal punishment than before, which can harm students’ health.”

The seminar concluded that corporal punishment should be practiced but with love and care, which will lead to a positive change after the punishment. Therefore, punishment must come from a group agreement and must not be cruel.

Participants were later informed no punishment at all is not desirable but that all physical punishment should be banned. If an adult hit another adult it would be considered illegal, but why not when an adult hits a child? In terms of mental health, the WHO has said that “a child-friendly school” must never practice corporal punishment. Research has proved that physical punishment does have a short-term effect, but causes aggressive behavior in the long term.

Corporal punishment is still being used in schools as they are unable to find a better way

to solve behavior problems. Therefore, schools should create an advanced culture forbidding all kinds of corporal punishment.

The CRC’s intention is clearly stated in Article 37[a]: “The States Parties shall ensure that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” which was mentioned in the fourth topic (“There is no bullying in the school”). When this is considered in relation to disciplining a child, the CRC provides in Article 28[2]: “The States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.”

Thai society cannot accept or act as provided in the CRC because learning about human rights is not yet widespread or clearly understood. The first preamble of the CRC provides that “... in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” The second preamble provides that “... all peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

Article 1 states that a “child means every human being below age of 18 years...” As the child’s physical and mental aspects are not fully developed yet, however, parents or guardians are needed. To this end, all appropriate legislative and administrative measures should be undertaken by the States Parties (Article 3[2]). Article 29[1b] provides for “The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.” Article 29[1d] provides that the States Parties agree to prepare “...the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding,

peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.”

A question to ask schools around the world and in Thailand is this: “Have we organized a suitable curriculum on learning about human rights? This is the lay-out for a democracy for the children and youth of our nation.”

Originally, WHO used this topic in the child-friendly school questionnaire: “The school does not publicly rank pupils by performance results.” Psychologically, students with low marks would be embarrassed and lose their faith in developing themselves if they are identified publicly. Avoiding ranking would create self-esteem and self-confidence. The main issue is this: While an examination-result ranking and a school report to the parents can still be done, do schools have to make public students’ performance results?

In line with Thai education reform, the use of “authentic” assessments such as self-assessment, evaluation by classmates and teachers, and various other methods were suggested. These focus on students’ abilities, do not promote competition, reduce stress and selfishness, and enhance mental health and well-being.

This topic is about the right to personal development under all kinds of education (formal and nonformal), and the right to have a standard living that promotes physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. The CRC’s intention is to enhance the “develop-

ment of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (Article 29[a]). The CRC has numerous provisions on holistic child development, and on the development of children in each age bracket. A child’s right to develop also appears in several other provisions (emphasizing social and personality development in Articles 5, 6, 13, 14, and 15).

Schools should consider whether or not their role is sufficient and detailed enough to help children develop. Should schools acquire new roles in child development?

Practices that reflect the importance of promoting child rights

School surveys yielded more than 86 activities and projects that promote child rights by

- giving students opportunities to express their opinions on and suggest ways to organize school activities,
- providing a variety of knowledge sources in school,
- giving students opportunities to choose activities and learn based on their own interest,
- providing a joyful learning process,
- allowing students to evaluate their own work,
- reducing physical punishments and threats,
- reducing the use of bad words to criticize others,
- conducting the “Warm Family” project,
- giving depressed children special care,

TOPIC 6. The school does not publicly rank pupils by performance results				
<i>Participants group</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Did not understand</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Against social cultural practice</i>
Student	50%	–	50%	–
Housewife	55.56%	11.11%	33.33%	–
Community leader				
Teacher	52.17%	–	43.48%	4.35%
Education supervisor	47.62%	4.76%	33.33%	14.29%
School administrator	75%	25%	–	–
	68.42%	–	12.05%	10.53%
Total	58.13%	6.81%	28.69%	4.86%

- conducting the home visitation project,
- counseling students,
- providing scholarships,
- providing lunch and clothing for poor students,
- developing democratic practices by organizing elections for students committees,
- conducting the hemorrhagic fever prevention project,
- providing resting areas for students,
- conducting the drug-free school project,
- developing schools with the cooperation and help of the parents and the community,
- improving the environment outside and inside classroom, and
- promoting music as a school program.

Two issues, however, need to be considered:

- Was a rights-based analysis conducted and were objectives set before undertaking these projects? This is relevant because the schools were already doing most of the activities before joining the child-friendly school project.
- Are the methods and roles of the teachers and others involved in the school based on child rights? Detailed analysis is needed to find out if the “best interest of the child” was considered before organizing the activities, and if students had a chance to give opinions and suggestions.

The answers to these questions will show whether or not communities understand and accept the idea of child rights and also determine whether or not the idea of child rights is new to child-friendly schools. Activities and projects on child rights need to be reviewed to ensure their benefit to children. The school must promote child-rights learning, and seek cooperation and support from community organizations and academic institutes using a social mobilization approach that protects the right to survive, to be protected, to develop, and to participate.

Ways to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child

We live in a world of information, and everyone is affected either positively or negatively. A world, once large, is now a global village. The issue of child rights has also grown significantly. The CRC is the convention on human rights ratified by the largest number of countries. Thai children must be treated as a national resource and raised with a vision as far-reaching as that of other civilizations.

Children have a right to give an opinion and express themselves

Article 12[1] of the CRC provides that “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

Article 13[1] provides that “the right (to)... freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”

Article 24 of Thailand’s National Education Act of 1999 also mentions that the learning process should “(1) provide substance and arrange activities in line with the learners’ interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences; (2) provide training in thinking process, management, how to face various situations and application of knowledge for obviating and solving problems...”

The CRC and education law show that listening, observing, and expressing are fundamental to a child’s development and affect the choice of learning approach for the child. This approach requires getting to know the child individually to allow understanding of his or her interests and abilities. The active participatory-learning approach allows students to share

their experiences, feelings, and thoughts through discussion. Active learning emphasizes decision making, developing options, and listening to opinions. All these techniques are used by child-friendly and regular primary schools undergoing reform.

Random observations, however, indicate that some classes still use only rote-learning techniques. Children still do not express their opinions in some school activities. While children do participate to a certain level, opportunities for adults are limited. In school committees, which are supposed to be democratic forums, many teachers still give orders instead of facilitating students' expression of opinions. Therefore, many students still lack the confidence to express their opinions or ask for information, limiting their development.

Suggestions for strategies and methods

- Teachers, school administrators, and parents must acquire a positive attitude to child participation, and to increase it by respecting and listening to the children's views.
- This system should have a policy of encouraging children's decision making and ability to express opinions. Teacher-training workshops on techniques to increase student participation should be organized to prepare a child to freely participate in a democratic society.
- The schools' learning processes should provide opportunities for children to express opinions. The learning approach should be changed from dependence on books and teachers to experiential activities for learners to construct their knowledge as intended by the National Education Act of 1999.
- Opportunities should be made available for students to form groups, clubs, and committees to express their needs, feelings, and opinions on school policy, rules, and orders for students, teachers and other personnel in school.

Children have the right to receive familial love and care

Article 18[1] of the CRC provides that "States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interest of the child will be their basic concern." And 18[2] provides that "...States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children."

Little cooperation exists between schools and parents. The "Education for All" Meeting report in January 2000 states that no report has been done to train families in raising children. The schools under the child-friendly school project have received support in organizing the SSA process. In 1999–2000 TLSDF supported a parents' workshop training program on life skills for preschool children. This led to increased cooperation between parents and teachers in organizing many activities. Many agree that the duty of educating our children belongs to everyone. Also essential are child-raising skills and development activities for parents to be provided by schools in certain communities.

Suggestions for strategies and methods

- Schools should organize a training workshop on child-raising for parents, and a program on children's development. Since most Thais greatly respect teachers, schools are the most successful government organization in reaching village people.
- Schools should organize parents' meetings at least once a semester and create a regular communication system with the parents

to exchange ideas on the child development and learning.

Children have a right to protection

Article 2[2] of the CRC provides that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.”

Article 3[2] provides that “States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.”

Article 19[1] provides that “States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

Suggestions for strategies and methods

- Schools should organize a safety system to monitor the behavior of students, teachers, and other school personnel to prevent threatening acts, physical punishment, and all forms of physical and mental violence that may effect the child’s development.
- Schools should create a network with government agencies and NGOs directly involved in child protection and physical and mental treatment of those who had been abused. A social network will work better than the school alone.

Children have the right to education

Article 28 [1] of the CRC provides that

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available and free to all;
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education...

xxx xxx xxx

- (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

Article 29[1] provides that

States Parties agree that the education of child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Article 10 of the National Education Act of 1999 states that “In the provision of education, all individuals shall have equal rights and opportunities to receive basic education provided by the State for the duration of at least 12 years. Such education, provided on a nationwide basis, shall be of quality and free of charge.” This relates to the rights to education of children in all forms of secondary and vocational schooling. Thailand has achieved very high rates of enrollment and needs only to raise the quality of education to reach the goal of CRC. Despite the increase in enrollment, some children were not surveyed and some dropped-out during the

term. A measurement tool is needed for schools and responsible organizations to track all children and help solve this problem.

Suggestions for strategies and methods

- A survey on the population should be conducted with the cooperation of the school and responsible organization to cover children who are due to undergo compulsory education. CRC also provides the right to education to a child with no birth certificate or certificate of Thai nationality. A disabled or minority child can be accepted in a usual school or a social welfare school.
- Schools should provide students with sufficient information on further education and careers through an effective guidance program. These would offer them more alternatives and help them in making decisions for their future.
- Schools should provide effective vocational trainings that can help students from poor families earn extra income and thus complete their studies.
- Schools should organize a life-skill activity program to promote behavior development as well as academic performance for all students.

Conclusion

The Thai education system needs to emphasize CRC principles in its policies and support programs for the school, community, and society. People need to learn and act to fulfill the

country's goal, especially human resource development, under the National Education Act of 1999 and the Constitution of 1997.

TLSDF will further develop its work of promoting CRC understanding and practice through the following activities under its programs:

- development of CRC syllabus for incorporation into school policy and curriculums by emphasizing the CRC framework and the Child Protection Law of 2001 under the Child-Friendly School Program;
- dissemination of CRC points of view through "Children's Lives" case studies under the planned Children's Voice from Dark Sites project. It aims to increase public and multisectoral networking toward understanding the plight of children with difficulties and disadvantaged children in northern Thailand who are judged guilty by public opinion as well as by juvenile and family courts, and whose rights are abused. The project will use communication and mass media strategies and instruments.
- promotion of the rights of children with difficulties, and disadvantaged children through youth participation and action projects by gathering and sharing experiences with the general public regarding CRC concepts.
- publishing *RakDek* (Protect the Children) magazine to promote CRC understanding in schools and government and non-governmental agencies that work for children and the public.