

MAIDS NEWSLETTER



Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Issue 10 – January 2009

Contents

International Conference Keynote Speech <i>By Sulak Sivaraksa</i>	...1-2
Reintegration of Trafficked Vietnamese Children and Women <i>By Le Quoc Loi</i>	...3
MAIDS Fieldtrip <i>By Sirisaranya Pakninrat</i>	...4-5
Rural Electrification in Laos <i>By Mattijs Smits</i>	...5
Protecting People Outside their State <i>By Mike Hayes</i>	...6-7
The Role of Thai Labor Solidarity Committee and Alliances <i>By Tassanee Surawanna</i>	...8
International Conference Keynote Speech (Continued) <i>By Sulak Sivaraksa</i>	...9
Student Thesis Profile and Alumni Interview <i>By Bea Moraras</i>	...10-11
Human Security Book Project <i>By Brennen Jenkins</i>	...11
MAIDS Program	...12



Renowned Social Critic Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa presents his Keynote Speech at the MAIDS-hosted international conference held at the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University on October 1-2, 2008

International Conference: **Regional Dynamism and Global Concerns**

Keynote Speech by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

[...] Education intoxicated the masses with half-truths instead of guiding them in the quest for truth, beauty or virtue. As a matter of fact, every educational institution here has become deferential to money, power, and Western mainstream thinking characterized by fragmentary, rather than holistic perspectives, with the brain separated from the heart. The goal of education was to prepare for a career that would match the time and effort spent. Whether or not the career in question was a right livelihood, it did not seem to matter at all.

The present ASEAN has none of the vital elements of its precursor. At present, it is very difficult to revive the ideas behind the League and to pave the way for regional dynamism that is concerned about the contemporary global condition because of the constellations of power – neoimperialism, neocolonialism, neoliberalism, etc. – that are controlling most of us, knowingly or unknowingly [...]

I may add that our traditional educational institutions are no better. Many of us have come to realize that whatever goes by the name of “Western modernity,” often called “development” or “globalization” is in fact neoimperialism – something that unjustly reaps the benefits away from the people.

Continued on page 2 ►

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Continued from page 1 ►

The Industrial Revolution spread the capitalist system through violence, conquests, ethnic cleansings, and slavery. Even within the heart of the empire, the poor are taken advantage of through various means. The more the upper class exploit the lower class, the more violent the present condition will become. This violence multiplies the more modern technology is introduced, the more power is vested in multinationals, and the more the superpower loses its moral conscience.

Economic, social and political inequalities, not to mention the exploitation that comes in various guises, form the roots of violence: Violence that is inflicted on those from a different class background, those believing in a different religious creed, and those practicing a different custom. These differences are linked to the unjust social structure, which, in turn, depends on the world economic order operating under neoliberalism. The stark differences existing in society result in one side enjoying privileges, making the other find various ways of opposition, even perhaps not through the normal means of justice, since the law serves the rich and powerful. Once one side abuses the other, it is natural that the other would retaliate, hence exacerbating violence. This corresponds with a Buddhist saying: "Bad deeds cannot be ended through retribution." If "bad deeds" keep persisting in our world, then our economies would continue to produce arms, including the most destructive weapons that profit the superpowers and their defence-related industries, at least in the short run. Eventually, such investments would yield no value to society but would only create losses.

Today's world has transformed "I think, therefore I am" to "I buy, therefore I am", the essence of consumerism. The reason why we study is to be able to get a job and make money. Money for buying goods we do not need. It follows that if we lose the power to buy, we lose the purpose of our lives. And if we don't consume, at least we have to compete with one another: we are all entrepreneurs of our lives.

How then do we find a way out of violence and for egalitarianism? The answer lies of course in the pursuit of non-violent means. That is, we need to swim against the mainstream currents of thought. We have to cease developing technologies of mass destruction. We have to set limits to modern technological developments. We have to make the existing free trade fair, transparent and bounded. From a Buddhist perspective, all forms of suffering in this world are directly or indirectly derived from three root causes; that is, greed, hatred and delusion. At present, greed is expressed through capitalism, entrepreneurialism, and consumerism. People come to believe in money and worldly sciences, including modern technology which leaves us little time to search for our true capabilities or the miracles of life. We should realize that the basis of Western philosophy lies in the Cartesian dictum "*cogito ergo sum*" or "I think, therefore I am." We learned that Descartes is the Father of Modern Philosophy, but have we ever contemplated where the roots of individualism are? Individualism, expressed by oneself, is in fact a duality: If there exists a "one", there also exists an "other." This essence is contrary to the Buddhist principle of interdependence of all beings. In fact, we inter-are.

Today's world has transformed "I think, therefore I am" to "I buy, therefore I am", the essence of consumerism. The reason why we study is to be able to get a job and make money. Money for buying goods we do not need. It follows that if we lose the power to buy, we lose the purpose of our lives. And if we don't consume, at least we have to compete with one another: we are all entrepreneurs of our lives.

Have we ever realized that we have been misguided by something that is the cause of violence? To achieve peace, Buddhism proposes the dictum "I breathe therefore I am." Our humanity is not about our thoughts. Thoughts may make us more intelligent, but they certainly do not make us into good persons. Even without thinking, we might be good. But without breathing, we die. We constantly breathe, without stopping. Yet we do not seem to give any importance to breathing. We take our first breath when we are conceived and our last when our bodies are dead. With Western education, however, we ignore the importance of breathing. We breathe in anger, hatred, stress, vengeance, greed, and delusion almost all the time [...]

When we are conscious, we are able to understand the essence of mindfulness, which is the key to life. To understand life means more than knowing the sum of its mechanical parts – however this is what we have been taught by scientific materialism. At least we should come to realize that we should not be living our lives for personal glorification, for climbing the social ladder – which is abound with injustices, but we should rather recognize that the downtrodden and the exploited members of our society are no less important than us. We should also realize that we share a responsibility in protecting our natural environment, which is being incessantly destroyed. We should also learn how not to hate even those who are exploiting us, but we should instead overcome the unjust and violent social structure.

Continued on page 9 ►

Reintegration of Trafficked Vietnamese Children and Women: A Case Study of An Giang Province

Conference Abstract by Le Quoc Loi, 2008 MAIDS Alumni & SCG Foundation Scholar



Following the completion of the MAIDS program, Mr. Le Quoc Loi accepted an internship at the Foundation for Women in Bangkok to gain practical work experience related to his above-mentioned M.A. thesis topic. The following conference abstract was presented at the MAIDS-hosted international conference entitled *Regional Dynamism and Global Concerns* held at the Faculty of Political Science on October 1-2, 2008. In early 2009, Mr. Loi will be returning to Vietnam to continue his work at the Office for Research and International Relations at An Giang University.

Reintegration for victims of human trafficking is quite a sensitive issue in An Giang. Reintegration for victims of trafficking does not simply imply the geographic movement of children or women back home or to an alternative location; it is more about how to recover from physical and emotional trauma to face their new life situation. This involves a re-adaptation and re-incorporation into the various social, cultural and economic conditions. Although An Giang is considered the second human trafficking centre in Vietnam, and anti-trafficking efforts draws much attention from NGOs and government agencies, the reintegration work for such victims in An Giang still needs to be strengthened especially for women and children. Hence this research is necessary to discover the gaps in the reintegration process practiced in An Giang in order to secure the sustainable livelihood of returnees and promote better reintegration practices for trafficked victims.

Participatory observation has been applied to this research due to the sensitive reality of victim assessment and the ensuing attempt to reintegrate trafficked victims in An Giang. This method utilizes the techniques of a known researcher who listens, observes and asks detailed questions to those who are involved in the reintegration process in An Giang. First and foremost, the findings demonstrate that the reintegration process in An Giang has received attention from both government agencies and NGOs; however, comprehensive financial support for the victims derives mostly from the latter. Secondly, the findings reflect the absence or a certain degree of ineffectiveness in the vocational training for the victims at the grass-roots level. Thirdly, stigmatization is not always a priority facing the official returnees but their unofficial counterparts are subject to ridicule from their community as well as sub-standard living conditions. The process for claiming support is somewhat frustrating, preventing many from seeking official support. Finally, the research could not find a clear community role of support for the trafficked victims in terms of psychological rehabilitation, livelihood assistance and social relations. Most of the present support hinges on NGO efforts and investment. The findings also affirm that the mechanisms to support the victims of human trafficking merely meet the basic needs of the victims. Further assistance in terms of vocational training, job placement or comprehensive support for victims and their families is in short supply. There does not seem to be much of a problem regarding the cooperation of government agencies supporting official returnees. However, the cooperation between government agencies and NGOs often paints a different picture whereby each has a different view of how to treat the problem.

The research provides suggestions for more comprehensive support from NGOs in combination with community-based follow-up to reduce the existing limitations in the reintegration process. Suggestions are also given for government agencies to ensure better cooperation among implementing organizations based on the perspectives of NGOs and trafficked victims.

SCG Foundation Scholarship Program

NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS: up to 7

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Full-time government employees from one of the following six countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines
- ▶ Bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences; good overall academic standing
- ▶ 2 years work/volunteer experience in a related field
- ▶ Evidence of English proficiency

SCHOLARSHIP COVERAGE:

- ▶ Round-trip airfare
- ▶ Tuition fees
- ▶ Living allowances
- ▶ Health insurance

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 31st, 2009

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION:

www.ids.polsci.chula.ac.th

www.scgfoundation.org



MAIDS Fieldtrip

Development Dilemmas:

A Case Study of Ayutthaya Province

Fieldtrip Overview by Sirisaranya Paknirat, MAIDS Program Coordinator

Introduction

During the last few decades, countries in Southeast Asia have witnessed rapid industrialization leading to dramatic changes in the socio-economic structure. In many countries, the development of infrastructure has further expanded industrial zones to the peripheries which used to be agricultural areas. The physical changes have further mutated social relations in communities especially those where tourism is now a central pillar to the development strategy. The search for a balance between development and conservation is thus being shifted to the forefront. Conflicting goals and objectives in different agencies have exacerbated development dilemmas, setting the stage for our first fieldtrip of the 2008-2009 MAIDS academic year.

Thailand is a good example of the above-mentioned phenomenon. Export led growth as a national development strategy has resulted in an attempt to create industrial zones in many provinces. Meanwhile, tourism has been integrated as one of local or national development strategies. These policy implications are manifested in Ayutthaya Province where the vision to optimize the use of resources has led to polarizing provincial development dilemmas.



2008-2009 MAIDS Students gather for a photo at Wat Chai Wattanaram in Ayutthaya province on November 26th, 2008

Fieldtrip Itinerary: **Wednesday November 26th, 2008**

- 08.00 Departure from Chulalongkorn University
- 10.00 Arrival at Rojana Industrial Park
- 10.05 Brief Presentation on Industrial Planning & Industrial Park Management
 - *Ayutthaya Province Industrial Officer*
 - *Rojana Industrial Park Manager*
- 11.30 Departure from Rojana Industrial Park
- 12.00 Lunch
- 13.30 Arrival at Ayutthaya Historical Park
- 13.35 Presentation on the Management of Ayutthaya Historical Park
 - *Ayutthaya Historical Park Officer*
- 14.30 Independent Observation Tour of the Park
- 16.00 Exchange with Community Leaders
 - *Mr. Preecha Dussadul, Mayor*
 - *Mr. Surin Kitnitchee, Community Leader*
- 17.00 Departure from Ayutthaya

A field visit to Ayutthaya Province provided an opportunity for students in the development studies programme to explore multidimensional aspects of development. Cross-cutting issues include industrialization and local resource management as well as conservation and community development. Students will also have an opportunity to explore the sights of Ayutthaya province.

Overview of Ayutthaya Province

Ayutthaya is one of the central provinces of Thailand. It is located 76 kilometers north of Bangkok in the flat river plain of the Chao Praya River valley. Ayutthaya was the capital of Thailand for 417 years from 1350 to 1767. The province is renowned as one of the major tourist attractions in Thailand. The ruins of the old capital in Ayutthaya historical park were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 1991. In addition, the province is an important agricultural area with extensive rice farming. With infrastructure development, Ayutthaya has also become a central industrial area hosting many industrial parks. The province is in the second zone of investment promotion with approximately 1,109 factories. Three industrial estates: Bang Pa-In, Ban Hwa (Hi-Tech) and Saha Ratana Nakhon, Rojana Industrial Park and Wang Noi Factory land (Agricultural Industry) are provided for investors.

Sources: <http://www.ayutthaya.go.th>;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayutthaya_Province

Continued on page 5 ►

Physical, Socio-economical and Political Challenges of Rural Electrification: The Case of Pico-hydropower as a Neglected Source of Electricity for People in Off-grid Areas in Laos

Public Lecture Abstract by Mattijs Smits

Mr. Mattijs Smits is currently working as a Project Coordinator at the Lao Institute for Renewable Energy in Vientiane, Laos. He is interested in the field of sustainable energy technology development in developing countries. Mr. Smits came to Thailand to deliver a special public lecture on the topic of rural electrification as part of the 2008-2009 MAIDS Environmental Politics and Policy course. The following abstract is a summary of Mr. Mattijs' MAIDS Public Lecture and intends to give readers a glimpse into the challenges of rural electrification in off-grid areas in Laos.

This lecture is an introduction to the discussion of the physical, socio-economical and political challenges of off-grid rural electrification, exemplified by the empirical case of pico-hydropower in Lao PDR. Pico-hydropower units generate electricity at the household level and are entirely market-driven. There are an estimated 60,000 units in the country, rendering it the most important source of off-grid electricity using renewable energy. Since there is virtually no empirical information on this technology in Laos, a detailed technographic description will be given of the hardware, market and use of this technology in the first part of the lecture. This information will be used as a basis to analyze the different actors of off-grid electrification at the national level in Laos and specifically to address why they have neglected pico-hydropower in their plans and policies. It will be argued that the environment of poor information in Lao PDR results in inefficient policies driven by actors' interests rather than empirical bottom-up information.



Mr. Mattijs Smits during his MAIDS Public Lecture on November 28th, 2008.

Continued from page 4 ►

Ayutthaya Fieldtrip Sites and their Significance

by Sirisaranya Pakninrat, MAIDS Program Coordinator

1. Royana Industrial Park

A visit to Royana Industrial Park aimed to facilitate students' understanding of industrial planning in Ayutthaya Province. Students had the opportunity to meet a Provincial Officer in charge of industrial planning and development. In addition, the industrial park management was explored through a briefing session by the Industrial Park Manager.

2. Ayutthaya Historical Park

At Ayutthaya Historical Park, the issues of local resource management and conservation were examined through the city's tourism management strategy. Special emphasis was put on the issues facing the park in managing a world heritage site. In addition, management approaches of the park were discussed in order to uncover the community involvement in heritage management.

3. Meeting Community Leaders

At the end of the day, students met the Mayor and other community leaders to share their reflections on the development in Ayutthaya Province. The final stage of reflection aimed to recapitulate an essential point of the field visit: "How does the province achieve a balance of infrastructure development and cultural conservation in tandem with community development?"

Protecting People Outside their State: Does the Legal Framework Work?

Project Overview by Dr. Mike Hayes, MAIDS Visiting Lecturer

Over the years, Dr. Mike Hayes has been actively involved at the MAIDS program teaching various courses and supervising students for their thesis dissertations. He is currently a Lecturer at the Office for Human Rights Studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok. His office was recently awarded a grant by the Swiss Government to look at the status of Human Rights 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The research project is in the area of migration, and a team of researchers from the Office of Human Rights is currently working on the project which is outlined below.

The dramatic increase in the number of people who are outside their State's protection has produced a range of tensions in the systems which protect them:

- the legal framework for their protection is incomplete and sometimes ambiguous;
- the response by international and national level organizations to these peoples' needs can become politicized or limited by outdated mandates;
- there is an increase in the type and severity of violations which they face, and for which there may be no response.

These issues are perhaps the most crucial for contemporary human rights. Traditionally human rights described a relationship between a State and its citizens, but new concerns are emerging with the movement of people: States are being asked to protect the rights of non-citizens, and also must attempt to protect its citizens who are not in their territory.

The status of people outside of their State's protection is fluid. A person's status can change instantly through political changes, acts of coercion or deception, or entering contractual agreements. At some point, they may fit into two or more categories at once, and then there may be other situations where there may be no protection at all. There are concerns about State practices exploiting holes in the system, or NGOs being compelled to limit their activities to comply with legal or political constraints which do not reflect the situation on the ground. To date little has been done to understand the ramifications on human rights standards.

Early post-war protection for people outside their State was limited to the Universal Declaration, a small number of other treaties such as the Refugee Convention, and some limited continuance of the minority treaties organized under the League of Nations. There have been numerous recent developments in human rights for people outside their State, particularly in the areas of migrant workers, people who are trafficked, and the expansion of humanitarian activities. The key mechanisms of protection are: the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugee Convention), and its 1967 Protocol; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW); the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol); and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). A critical point of the complexity is the overlap and gaps that occur when distinguishing between different categories of people outside their country. The traditional categories of political refugee, person fleeing disaster (whether man-made or natural), migrant worker, and trafficked person can either be too limiting or not clearly separated. While each category has its own laws, and clear definition of who is subject to the law, it is quite conceivable that one person can fit, at various times, all of these categories; it is also common that one person can fit multiple categories simultaneously. This leads to problems not only in which legal framework is the most appropriate, or what organizations are mandated to protect them, but also how the categorization of groups of people can be politically manipulated by States or other organizations.

MAIDS Pre-Session Course Fieldtrip



2008-2009 MAIDS students exchange ideas with community members from the Rimtangrodjai Community during their pre-session course fieldtrip on September 16th, 2008. The one-day fieldtrip in Bangkok centered on the urban poor as they visited a homeless shelter and a community negatively affected by rapid urban development.

Continued on page 7 ►

Continued from page 6 ►

There is no surprise that there is a lack of coordination between these treaties. Firstly, they do emerge at quite different periods in response to different problems in the world. The Refugee Convention and IHL emerge in a post World War Two world; the CMW and Palermo Protocol are more related to the rise of globalization. Further, each legal framework operates in distinct institutional fields: while the CMW is managed by its treaty body and other United Nations bodies (such as the Human Rights Council), IHL is managed by the ICRC, and the Refugee Convention and Palermo Protocol, while closely related to UN bodies, are significantly determined by States themselves. There are numerous other distinctions including State obligations, the enforcement of the treaties, monitoring bodies, and legal protection mechanisms.

Let us look specifically at some of these relationships between the treaties:

1. Trafficking-Migrant Worker:

The relationship between Migrant Workers and Trafficking persons may be simplified into two responses: those who consider a continuum exists (that is, where Migrant Workers can become trafficked when there is a change in circumstances), and those who see the two groups as mutually exclusive. For those that consider these two groups exclusive, there is a necessity to keep trafficking as a special category and a serious violation; to mix this with migrant workers who, for example, do not receive payment for their work, is to reduce the severity of trafficking. Further, States often have clear policies regarding non-nations working in their territory, and they do not want to extend any further protection or benefits to these workers, which may come from allowing violations of migrant worker's rights to be considered trafficking. Migrant workers must remain an isolated category. The response which considers there is a continuum between the groups see that people outside their State are vulnerable and they need protection from serious violations. That a person leaves their country for economic reasons should not alter the severity of the violation, and therefore migrant workers seeking economic benefits should be given the support and protection of trafficked persons if they face exploitation at the level of a trafficked person.

2. Migrant Worker-Refugee:

States, in response to refugees or other displaced people undertaking economic activities to support themselves in their territory, will either turn a blind eye if this is a limited activity, or they will ensure that these people cannot work if it in any way threatens security. It is very uncommon for the State to allow refugees to work legally and to get protection for any violations that may occur while they are working. This is a pertinent issue in Thailand where refugees housed in the nine camps along the Thai-Burmese border are not permitted any form of economic activity. However, they frequently leave the camp to work in order to support their families. The work is often paid at below the minimum wage level, working in basic conditions, and if they are caught they risk being deported back into Burma. Cases such as this occur in a number of refugee receiving countries, and there is a debate whether the status of refugee should be kept separate from workers rights (as most States wish), or if a refugee should not be denied these rights. Again, there are two responses to this dimension: some advocate for separating the categories, so that refugees cannot receive any of the rights given to Migrant Workers, and those who see gainful wage earning as a right for refugees.

3. Refugee-Trafficking:

There are two developing areas in this relationship between the treaties. Firstly, trafficked persons have recently been granted refugee status in order to protect them from persecution relating to them being subject to trafficking. While this may seem that trafficking and refugee law are complimentary, current State practice, and the emphasis of the Palermo Protocol, tends to be on the repatriation of trafficked persons to their home country. To establish a standard whereby trafficked persons can gain the same protection as a refugee will lead to a rethinking of repatriation, amongst other concerns. Another relationship between trafficking and refugees is the vulnerability of refugee and displaced persons to trafficking; there has been widespread concern about people being trafficked from refugee camps, yet there has been little, if any research done on this problem.

Organizations working in these areas must adapt programmatic strategies in response to the newer protocols and conventions and take into account the shifts in human movement that leave increasing numbers of people either under- or un-protected. We have seen organizations profoundly change their range of activities in this area: from intergovernmental organizations like the UNHCR which is now working mainly in the humanitarian care of people who do not fit the refugee convention, to the explosion in the number of groups working on trafficking, and the expansion of many labour rights movements and trade unions to investigate the protection of migrant workers. Within these organizations, decisions are made to solicit funds and/or direct existing resources to programs that are sanctioned – in some degree – by the newer protocols. But the research team has seen from previous experience that a variety of organizations working in the broad field of migration and human rights are finding that protecting people outside their State is increasingly political. Organizations must balance their mandates, human rights standards, and political realities.

The Roles of Thai Labour Solidarity Committee and Alliances on the Movement for the Protection of Migrant Workers in Thailand

Conference Abstract by Tassanee Surawanna, 2007-2008 MAIDS Student & SCG Foundation Scholar



Ms. Tassanee Surawanna currently works as a Program Officer for the Raks Thai Foundation's Bangkok office, a position she held prior to commencing her MAIDS studies. The following conference abstract was presented at the 9th Thai National Conference on Political Science and Public Administration held at Chulalongkorn University on December 2-3, 2008. This conference invited numerous Thai and international experts to debate the overarching theme of Thai democratization in light of the current political climate. Ms. Tassanee presented her research findings under the MAIDS-hosted panel entitled Regional Democracy, Development and Governance.

This qualitative research paper aims to study the movement of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee (TLSC) and alliances in terms of their concepts, structure and strategies. It also served to evaluate the impacts of their activities on policy and social change towards the protection of migrant workers in Thailand. Data was collected from in-depth interviews with representatives from the leading actors of TLSC, Thai Worker's Union, labour-related and migrant-related NGOs, migrant workers and Thai workers involved in the movement for the protection of migrant workers. The research found that TLSC had used the concept of Human Rights for their movement. However, the ideas of Nationalism, National Security and Labour Security are still great challenges for promoting the protection of migrant workers.

Notably, the TLSC does have a clear structure at the administrative level. The coordination centre operates mainly in Bangkok with support from member organizations for the coordination at the regional and provincial levels. The main strategy of TLSC's movement includes campaigning, mobile labour education, capacity building and information dissemination at the central and regional levels. The TLSC receive technical support from academic institutions and international organizations while financial support derives from membership fee collection as well as grants from international organizations for their activities.

In the central region, the TLSC and their migrant-related NGO alliances have played a leading role in the national campaign and movement whereas Thai labour-based organizations and other NGOs play more of a supporting function. At the provincial level, the TLSC play more of a supporting role while members and alliances take the lead in creating different strategies for the labour movement. Since implementation is not mandatory, each member and alliance can develop their own policies for the said movement. As a result, it has had an uneven impact relating directly to the strategies utilized and actual extent of successful implementation.

At the central level, the TLSC campaign has stimulated and increased the concern of the government, media and public, especially locals advocating on behalf of migrant workers. This has not, however, led to the creation of more supportive policies for their protection. At the provincial level, impacts still hinge on the implementation of projects by local organizations in the area. Though in many areas the Thai Worker's Union and Thai Worker's Federation did not show sufficient implementation strategies to protect migrant workers, there were nonetheless different levels of progress where Thai and international migrant workers have faced common struggles and this paved the way for mutual benefit as in the case of Samutprakarn and Chiang Mai province.

AF – MAIDS Scholarship Program

NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS: 2

(1 scholarship reserved for a Thai national; 1 scholarship provided for a CLMV national)

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Bonafide ASEAN nationals from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar
- ▶ Bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences with good overall academic standing
- ▶ 2 years work/volunteer experience in a related field
- ▶ Evidence of English proficiency

SCHOLARSHIP COVERAGE:

- ▶ Round-trip airfare
- ▶ Tuition fees
- ▶ Living allowances
- ▶ Health insurance

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 31st, 2009

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION:

www.ids.polsci.chula.ac.th/AF-MAIDSScholarshipProgram.htm



ASEAN FOUNDATION



Continued from page 2 ►

The core teachings of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths and the first is the Truth of Suffering. If we do not confront suffering, we do not know the essence of it. Suffering is both individual and social. What we call globalization or modern development does not have an understanding of the essence of suffering. One escapes from suffering using intoxicating means of consumerism and globalization as the civilization of the new generation. However, globalization does not acknowledge the essence and meaning of life at all. Arguably, globalization may improve the livelihood of the people, but it also denies the path towards true happiness, which is peace.

Heinrich Boll Foundation: Welcoming and Farewell Reception



The Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF)'s Southeast Asia Regional Office received a flower arrangement from the MAIDS program at a special reception held on December 4th, 2008. The event served to welcome incoming Director Ms. Jana Mittag (right) and offer farewell to the outgoing Director Dr. Heike Loeschmann (left) of the HBF's Chiang Mai office. The MAIDS program would like to take this opportunity to thank the HBF for their continual support of our scholars from Myanmar. We wish Dr. Heike the best of luck back in Germany and we look forward to continued collaboration with HBF under Ms. Mittag!

From a Buddhist perspective, man can enjoy happiness when man has three levels of freedom: (1) Freedom to have a decent livelihood, which is conditioned by the material and the natural environments. In other words, man should not be taken advantage of in the pursuit of a good life. His environment should not be destroyed so that it drifts away from its natural equilibrium. Man should also be aware of the dangers lurking in nature and hence adapt himself to such dangers. (2) Freedom to enjoy a good life with others. This means freedom from being exploited by fellow men, be it from the state, theft, or dangers from capitalism and consumerism. Both freedoms are factors which foster man to achieve freedom of the mind, which is supreme happiness. Man would be content in living simply, be compassionate towards others and should safeguard the environment. From a theological perspective, man must be able to experience God. Once man is able to be with God, or recognize the supreme Dhamma, his ego would diminish and peace would consequently be an important basis of his life and his society.

If we do not confront suffering, we do not know the essence of it...One escapes from suffering using intoxicating means of consumerism and globalization as the civilization of the new generation.

In order to achieve peace in society, contemporaries who already have seeds of peace embedded in them need to analyze the structure of society in order to understand how greed, anger, and delusion are expressed. It is fortunate that this idea is gaining

some currency, beginning from Schumacher's writings on Buddhist Economics some 35 years ago to the works of the Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa in Siam. Cobb and Daly also wrote a wonderful book on Christian economics which is really challenging neoliberalism. There is even a school of political science that denounces violence; i.e. Glenn Paige's, and it has gained considerable interests in various educational establishments. Not to mention David Loy and his Buddhist approach to the social sciences.

With the Buddhist perspectives on greed and hatred, true understanding of delusion becomes even more important. At last, there are some in institutions of learning who are yearning for contemplative education, which is closely associated with the study of morals. In doing so, society would return to normalcy and peace would be achieved, ultimately resulting in mindfulness to achieve the highest freedom – wisdom, the essence of peace.

I sincerely hope that what I have said would enable you to contemplate clearly on the present global condition and perhaps would even make you act by challenging the *status quo* – the intellectual subservience to the mainstream Western domination which people in other parts of the world have been naively following far too long. Perhaps you could achieve peace in society and the world by first achieving peace within yourselves. Perhaps you could spread your individual state of peace through a culture of awakening and non-violence, replacing the evil and violence existing in today's societies.

Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa's keynote speech was delivered at the International Development Studies Conference entitled Regional Dynamism and Global Concerns at Chulalongkorn University on October 1st, 2008. To read Ajarn Sivaraksa's speech in its entirety, please visit the newswire page of the MAIDS website – www.ids.polsci.chula.ac.th/newswire.

Student Thesis Profile

Broadening the Sufficiency Economy Debate: A Critical Examination of the Prospects and Limitations of Sufficiency Economy as an Alternative Development Approach in Thailand

By Bea Moraras, 2007 MAIDS Alumni

This research expands the debate on Sufficiency Economy in Thailand by looking at both the prospects and limitations of Sufficiency Economy as an alternative development approach that leads to social transformation. It engages critically with Sufficiency Economy philosophy and practice by identifying the strengths as well as the inconsistencies and gaps of the Sufficiency Economy approach in regards to equity and grassroots empowerment.

Alternative development is defined in this research as development that is equity-led instead of growth-led. While one theoretical strand of Sufficiency Economy interprets the Sufficiency Economy approach as growth-led and compatible with mainstream economics, another strand perceives the Sufficiency Economy approach as a rejection of economic growth and capitalism. Furthermore, the aim of attainment of sufficiency for all is a prospect for Sufficiency Economy as an alternative development approach, whereas the main limitation of the Sufficiency Economy approach is the lack of explicit and central concern for reduction of inequality.

Alternative development can be achieved through grassroots empowerment. Through the concept of self-reliance, the Sufficiency Economy approach empowers certain individuals and communities to take action to meet their own needs in food and material production. However, the Sufficiency Economy approach cannot be considered true "alternative development" because it does not question power relations, redistribute power, or transform institutions, thereby contributing to upholding the status quo power structure in Thai society.



Ms. Bea Moraras at her worksite near Ban Don Yang Refugee Camp in Sangklaburi.

Off to the Field!

Interview with Bea Moraras

1. Can you briefly explain your role as a Case Worker at the International Rescue Committee (IRC)?

As a Case Worker, I conduct pre-screening interviews of refugees (mostly from Burma) who are applying for resettlement to the United States. I also assist them in filling out applications for resettlement. I collect basic biographical and family information as well as interview refugees about the reasons they left their home countries and why they can not return. After they interview with the IRC, the refugees have a subsequent interview with a U.S. government agency which determines whether they are approved to be resettled to the U.S.

2. It sounds like your job involves a lot of travelling in Thailand and the region. I know you were looking to get more field experience following graduation. Do you find your current work strikes a balance between field and office work? Are you able to live a relatively normal lifestyle?

Three weeks out of the month I am in the field interviewing refugees at our worksite near a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border or in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. However, interviewing in the field involves a great deal of paperwork and relies heavily on technology. Our worksites – sometimes huts, sometimes trailers – are equipped with laptop computers, servers, and printers necessary for us to collect information and fill out applications for refugees. As for the frequent travelling, this makes it quite difficult to live a normal lifestyle. The only normal aspect about my lifestyle is constant transition. Every month, I am in a different place, working with a different team of people and a different refugee population.

Continued on page 11 ►

Continued from page 10 ►

3. Can you describe a typical workday at one of the refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border?

The work day starts quite early around 7AM and involves a car ride, sometimes on roads with bad conditions, in order to get to our worksites located near the actual camps. Once we arrive at the worksite, Case Workers begin interviewing refugees with the help of interpreters who we work closely with all day long. Case Workers generally interview around 3 cases a day, and the number of people on each case can range from one to ten people. Sometimes we have to struggle to conduct interviews over the sound of crying babies and kids running around the interview areas. Typically, we have to pack our own lunches for the work day as there are limited or no food options at the worksite. The work day ends with another car ride back to the nearby town where we stay.

4. What do you find to be the most challenging part of your job? Is it the work itself or the exposure to people living in difficult circumstances?

Usually the most challenging part of the job is the work itself, which can be exhausting. The job requires the ability to multi-task and think quickly, as well as balance efficiency with accuracy in information collection. Once in a while, I will interview a case with an especially compelling or unique story. It is these cases which are especially difficult to deal with emotionally – but at the same time these are the most rewarding cases.

5. In retrospect, did the MAIDS program help to prepare you for your current role as a development practitioner?

The MAIDS course on Migration has given me an overall understanding of migrant and refugee issues and I am able to draw on concepts I learned in that class in order to understand the life circumstances of the refugees I interview. Furthermore, MAIDS field trips in addition to field interviews I conducted for my thesis have also given me exposure to field work and helped prepare me for interviewing refugees in the field.

MAIDS Publication Human Security Book Project

Project Overview by Brennen Jenkins, MAIDS Program Officer

The Human Security conference entitled *Mainstreaming Human Security: The Asian Contribution* was hosted by the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University on October 4-5, 2007. It was structured into thematic panels, each raising important security-related issues including floods, migration, violence and gender. Please visit the Human Security Conference website for comprehensive information including the newly added keynote speeches, panel discussions and final conference papers - <http://humansecurityconf.polsci.chula.ac.th>.

The Human Security Book Project is intended to showcase the best papers from the 2007 conference. First and foremost, it intends to theoretically reinforce the conference panels by providing a more complete discussion of the topic. Second, the book project will be the first concrete step to mobilize conference participants, conference conveners and paper presenters alike for the intended Regional Human Security Network – one of the central conference objectives.

The book editors are united to push the mainstreaming trend of Human Security, which was brought to the forefront at the 2007 conference. They equally hope to make the concept's discourses more pragmatic by stressing original, evidence-based research.

It is expected that human security will be normalized in the existing structure of policy practices in both the development and security sectors. However, there is still considerable debate over the relevance of the concept; the book expects to emphasize its validity through the empirical content of papers chosen for the final publication.

Book Project Editors

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