



Seminar

**Impact of Southern Violence on Women:  
Women's Participation in Peace-building**

**25-26 April 2007, Pattani**

**Organised by FES and  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Prince of Songkhla University**

80% of the population of the three southernmost provinces of Thailand – Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat – are Muslims of Malay origin. In the past, this region was an independent state and has been integrated into the kingdom over a hundred years ago. Occasional incidents of uprising against the government in Bangkok and violent conflicts were the consequence. The latest eruption of violence since January 2004 appears to be more serious than in the past, as it has been continuing for almost four years now and the number of victims killed or injured is growing daily. After the eruption of violence, many concerned Thai and international organisations have turned their attention to this region and the conflict. Since there was a general lack of data and information regarding the three provinces, many groups have conducted studies on different topics; one issue, though, tends to be overlooked by most studies – gender relations and women's issues. Therefore, FES has commissioned a study on the impact of violence on women.

The study found that with 14% fewer women have been targeted as victims killed or injured; but they are survivors of the families of 86% men killed or injured and have to shoulder suddenly all family burdens alone, like being responsible to earn a livelihood and financing the education of their children as well as dealing with all legal matters, which they are not familiar with. At the same time they suffer the psychological consequences because of the loss of family members. Besides directly affected women, there are other women who would like to become active protagonists of peace-building but still have limited capacities and opportunities to take part in socio-political activities due to the patriarchal culture of their region. Also, there are some women's organisations working at the grassroots level for practical needs, but gender issues related to the southern conflict tend to be overlooked at the policy level.

FES and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani province, the main educational institution in the area, co-organised a seminar to present the results of the study and to discuss possibilities of cooperation and action among women leaders. Participants were both, Muslims and Buddhists from the three southern provinces and the neighbouring Songkhla province who have been active in different fields – academics, community leaders, local politicians, NGOs, media and civil servants.

Besides the content of the study, participants also discussed other main concerns.

1. The worsening relationship between people of the two religions, Muslim and Buddhist, in many villages: Women are seen as having the potential to bridge the gap because they appear to be more flexible regarding multicultural relationships than men; multicultural dialogue is seen as needed to rebuild trust among people.

2. The increasing link of women to violence and weapon use, such as becoming female rangers, attending gun trainings, involvement in capturing and beating female victims, blocking the work of authorities by demonstrations: The participants demanded more studies or knowledge on violent women, but getting access to information was seen as difficult and dangerous.
3. The need for organising women into groups and networking with others, both inside and outside the three provinces: This was regarded as crucial – necessary and helpful for further practical and policy advocacy work.
4. The need for capacity building: Women leaders in the South have no knowledge about what they could do to reduce violence and contribute to conflict transformation.
5. The need for participation in policy-making regarding the region: Women have different problems and needs from men, but they rarely are able or invited to take contribute.

The policy-related demands developed during the seminar were:

- sufficient and adequate support for economic activities of women;
- free education, more scholarships and safety zones for the education of children;
- quick and easy access to any assistance for affected women (psychological, economic support etc.);
- political capacity building for women and women's quotas in local government, so that the women could participate in decision-making, e.g. in allocating local budgets for women's concerns;
- more participation in policy making, especially regarding the balance of budget allocations for security forces, assistance to affected people and development.

These proposals were presented to the deputy director of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) who is responsible for the socio-economic development section of the agency and listened with a great interest. In his reply he stated that the SBPAC is in the process of designing a master plan on women's participation regarding peace-building and promised to invite the seminar participants to contribute to that planning.

Currently there are many organisations, governmental and non-governmental, working to provide assistance to directly affected women, since this topic is accepted by all as one of the most important. Other topics, such as dialogue skills and networking of women as well as participation of women in policy-related issues are rarely organised, so that this seminar was only the first in a series of initiatives to follow.

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