

Country Report : Thailand
Opportunity of Intellectual Disabled People in Thailand

Sriwongse HAVANANDA, M.D. Committee Member and Chairman : Planning & Quality
Service Improvement – The Foundation for the Welfare of the Mentally Retarded of
Thailand under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen

Abstract

Intellectual disabled people in Thailand have been treated with the better and more care after development of the services by both GO & NGO for intellectual disabled people since 1960 as the followings :

- 1) Development of intellectual disability services, sciences and technology
- 2) Advocation of the intellectual disability services from GO & NGO both human resources and financial services
- 3) Expansion and integration of the intellectual disability services in GO & NGO
- 4) Nation-wide communications through mass media
- 5) Rural development and primary health care program
- 6) Developing and strengthening the community management and public relation at the village level
- 7) Building the relationship throughout the whole country and internationally
- 8) Researching on the methodology of “Self Help Care” for intellectual disabled people
- 9) Empowering volunteers and families on the self management for improvement of intellectual disability country program
- 10) Development of Thai massage application to intellectual disabled people for solving physical, mental, and psychiatric problems
- 11) Close relationship to the AFMR and world organizations

In the near future, the intellectual disabled people and their families will have a better chance to learn more, to do more, and to be more successful in intellectual disability care.

From the concept of Democracy : By the people, For the people, and Belong to the people, the intellectual disability care in Thailand is growing continuously and permanently. By law, all intellectual disabled people have their right to get the services and to be treated equally.

Intellectual disabled people in Thailand will have more and better opportunity to gain the quality service by a close relationship through Asian Federation on Mental Retardation.

Introduction

Everyone in the world, male or female, rich or poor, educated or non-educated, married or unmarried, should have an equality in human right. Intellectual disability is a global phenomenon which needs a global perspective. Everyone should have an equalized opportunity to have an access to care, education, vocation, socialization, etc. by a global team for a global struggle.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, United Nations (UN) assembled a general determination of “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” in 1948 which aimed at treating people all equally irrespective of their differences and difficulties. Declaration on the Rights of Intellectual Disabled Persons was then established in 1971. UN’s adoption of the 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons underscored the need to include the disabled in everyday common practice by challenging the concept of segregation and institutionalized treatment towards the people with disabilities.

Asian Federation on Mental Retardation (AFMR) was developed and up to now, there are 15 countries as members in the Federation. Asian Conference on Mental Retardation was rotated among the AFMR member countries and there were 17 conferences arranged. Thailand was the host in 1979. Aggregation of all 15 countries in AFMR results in shared new technology, knowledge development, and closer relationship in order to do more and to learn more for moving to the universe.

I. Development of Intellectual Disability Services, Sciences and Technology

The prevalence of people with intellectual disability in Thailand is approximately 1 percent of the population. The population of Thailand is about 67 million with a growth rate of approximately 1.79 percent per annum.

In the earlier time, intellectual disabled children and adults were able to have services from department of pediatrics or medicine as well as the mental department in general hospitals.

On 24 June 1954, Department of Children’s Hospital was established in Women’s Hospital. Then, twenty years later Children’s Hospital was formed. Services for intellectual disabled (ID) children were started in 1954 by pediatricians. Firstly, the ID children were taken care by a team of specialists in pediatrics, pediatric surgery, and psychology. At the same time, university hospitals also provided a service for children and adults on consulting basis, not the direct care as Children’s Hospital.

In 1960, the specialty hospital for ID people, both children and adults, was developed which was named Rajanukul (Hospital) Institute.

Two years later in 1962, The Foundation for The Welfare of The Mentally Retarded of Thailand under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty The Queen (FMRT) was established as non-government organization (NGO) for ID people with complete cycle of medical, education, vocation, and social rehabilitation. This organization has wide coverage throughout the country.

Later on, Thai government developed the educational and training program for teachers for ID children.

Few years later, Rajanukul Institute under Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health, continued to expand more services for ID people.

In 1974, Ministry of Public Health reformed the service system integration as comprehensive services, prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation for physical, mental, and intellectual disorders.

In 1979, Ministry of Public Health applied the Primary Health Care (PHC) strategies to develop the ID services in term of mental health element by training village health volunteers, 10 persons from each tambon (7,255 tambons), to search for cases of psychosis, mental retardation / intellectual disability, and epilepsy. The volunteers were trained to give basic advices to the family and to assist in referring to the health service centers. Every level of health service center: village health centers, community hospital, provincial general hospital, and regional hospital, had to improve their capability to serve all cases.

In 1999, there was the project of children's right and group projects under UNICEF's support developed and taken care of by several associations and societies.

Currently, there are several government organizations providing services for ID people which are as follows :

Ministry of Public Health

Department of Mental Health

- Rajanukul Institute
- Yuwaprasat Waithayapathom Hospital
- 16 mental health institutes and hospitals
- 15 mental health centers

General hospitals : Provide assistance for assistive devices according to the rehabilitation for intellectual disabled persons.

Ministry of Education

- Special Education Center, Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Institute – Suan Dusit
- Department of General Education

Ministry of Social Development and Human Security

- Bureau of the Empowerment of persons with disability

Bangkok Metropolitan

- Office of Primary Education – Department of Bangkok Metropolitan
- 27 Centers of Primary Education

Ministry of University Affairs

- Kasetsart University Laboratory School, Kasetsart University
- Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, Srinakarinwirot University
- Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University

Activities :

1. Medical services for intellectual disabled to improve the disabilities
2. Community services to visit parents & families for self help practice
3. Service expansion
4. Education
 - Profession development and education for intellectual disabled persons, parents, families, and community
5. Researches
 - New technique for improving Thai massage service
 - Psychological problems in intellectual disabilities

6. Charity arrangement through parent group community and foreign organizations
7. Correlation with other service groups to exchange techniques, and cooperation with GO and NGO within the country, in foreign countries, and with international organizations
 - Seminars
 - Journal
 - Internet / E-mail

At the present time, the clinical practice guidelines are up to the international standard. The referral system has been improved. The ID people have more opportunity to get service giving the result of early intervention for ID children.

In conclusion, currently ID people have more opportunity to get the services. However, the services still have not yet successfully covered all of the intellectual disability problems.

Development of Sciences, Technology and Educational System

Modern sciences and technology have been spreading out all over the world. Thailand has also received the technology from the countries such as USA., Japan, Australia. Then, we developed the appropriate sciences and technology for our country.

- Medicine : FMRT is now on the process of using Thai massage to treat ID people, especially children.
- Education : Both direct training and co-training have been used in Thailand for a long period of time. Thirty years ago, Rajanukul is the first institute for people with intellectual disabilities.
 - Six years later, FMRT established :
 - Panyavuthikorn School for ID children with IQ of 40 – 70
 - Prapakarnpanya Center provides the education and training for ID children IQ of 20 – 40 and lower.
 - Panyakarn Center provides vocational training to the youth.
 - Tung Song Hong and Klongtoey Intellectual disabled Care Centers take care of small children up to youth.
 - 3 Regional MR centers under FMRT provide education & training for children and youth in the rural area of Thailand.

The department of special training for disability including ID under Ministry of Education provided three schools for children with intellectual disabilities and also built up many special schools for people with intellectual disabilities.

Ministry of Education has set up an integrated education to solve the problem and also to extend facilities for children with intellectual disabilities to learn in normal primary schools but not all it is only the readiness and can be facilitated. Education Law clarified that all children must have compulsory education for 9 years which also includes the ID children, if they are able to learn.

There are one or two private schools for ID children whose families can afford the tuition fee.

In conclusion, the ID children have opportunities in learning and training under the limitation conditions as above.

II. Advocation of the Intellectual Disabled Services from GO and NGO Both Human Resources and Financial Services

Development of Social Welfare for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Social welfare for ID people provided by the government and non-government organizations can be categorized as follows :

Sheltered Home :

In Thai culture, especially in the rural area, ID children and adults are taken care by their families and stay in their own homes. In Bangkok and other big cities, there are more individualization and economic problem. Each family is very busy working and earning for life. Sometimes, the ID people / children at home are in hands of careless nannies or servants. There are few sheltered homes that can serve only 1,500 ID people. These are inadequate for their needs. ID children still have small chance in continuous well training for their development.

Vocational Training :

There are only 3 vocational training centers for ID people.

- Panyakarn Vocational Training Center of FMRT
- Rajanukul Institute
- Vocational Training Center of Social Council of Thailand

Work Employment :

Most of ID people are helpful for their families, such as for housework, agricultural work, small industrial work, or work in their own family business. At the present time, there is a rule for every business or company to hire two disable persons but there is less opportunity for ID people to be hired. The registered disables will also receive 300 bahts per month for living from the government.

Medical and Rehabilitation Service :

In 1991, Thai government declared Disabled Rehabilitation Law. Every disable person shall receive the medical rehabilitation services from all public hospitals or health care centers without charges.

Movement of Self Advocacy Group :

Nowadays, the expansions of public relationship and knowledge on intellectual disability by mass media have been improved. Advocacy groups are quite strong in supporting several issues including the offer of financial assistance from the government, 300 baht per month per ID person. For socialization, FMRT has arranged a home-visiting program. ID people now have more social life and the tradition of concealing ID people in their own homes is faded.

The advocates of the services for ID people from GO and NGO have been on both human resources and financial services.

The National Development Plan (1997 – 2002)

“Improvement of Quality of People’s Life - Thai people must be born and growing up in the healthy family and receive both physical and mental services to live happily in the society... The disabled or the under privileged must have the right to receive services...”

In 1997, Thailand established the new constitution which some sections focus on the improvement of quality of life of disabled people such as :

Section 43 : A person shall enjoy an equal right to receive the Fundamental Education for the duration of not less than 2 years which shall be provided by the state thoroughly, up to the quality and without charge.

Section 52 : A person shall enjoy an equal right to receive standard public health service and the indigent shall have the right to receive free medical treatment from public health centres of the State as provided by law.

Section 55 : ... The disabled or handicapped shall have the right to receive public conveniences and other aids from the State, as provided by law.

Section 80 : ...The State shall provide aids to the elderly, the indigent, the disabled or handicapped and the under privileged for their good quality of life and the ability to depend on themselves

According to the mentioned issues, the ID people have the opportunity in many aspects as the followings :

- 1) Accessibility : The ID people have more chance to access the GO intellectual disability improvement services in particular area of assignment.
It is different from the FMRT service. They can get service of prevention, promotion, cure, and rehabilitation from every FMRT service center.
- 2) Financial Aids : Every intellectual disabled person will receive 300 baht per month. FMRT has home visit and gives self-help advice.
- 3) Participation : Tambon manages in setting up the organization and organizing committee, health volunteer. Tambon health service also includes the program of ID service. FMRT is the coordinator.
- 4) Integration : ID service is integrated in health service, educational service, vocational service, and social service of GO & NGO with FMRT as the initiator.
- 5) Educational improvement : The vision of policy is that “All ID people must have an education, if they want to.” The ID children would have an opportunity to study or to have special training in common school and vocational school as normal children.

There are special education centers located in each province for the handicap students including ID children. The ID children have an opportunity to develop themselves naturally and effectively. FMRT has categorized the educational levels into 3 levels of EQ : 20 – 40, 40 – 70, and vocational school.

Rajanukul Institute also has several schools in Bangkok and Pathum-thani.

- 6) Change of Society Attitude : In the earlier days, society believed that because of karma ID people had done in their past life causes the result of ID to this current life. It is hopeless to improve their quality of life. So, let it be as they are.

At the present time, the believe has been changed in more positive way. They can be improved by the education, training, public relation through scientific seminar for the medical professions, family volunteer, public relation through mass media, etc.

It is enlightened that the improvement to the society causes the change in attitude. The ID people have a better opportunity in improving their life with a better quality of life.

- 7) Employment : According to Labour Law “...every company which has 200 employees must employ on disabled person or the company has to pay the money back to the Disabled Fund for Employment.” Most of companies prefer to employ only physical disabled or pay the money back to the Disabled Fund for Employment instead of employing the people with intellectual disability.

Nowadays, this employment strategy is still being a problem. FMRT and parent association, therefore, work on a self-help program in training on the production materials for earning their life or working in their family. With Job Training Centers, Panyakarn of FMRT is the main organization is professional training for employment. Rajanukul Institute is also the other organization that helps on the employment of ID. For this purpose, therefore, the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) has been established.

- 8) Advocacy Grouping : An advocacy group has been formed by both GO and NGO for the ID people. Rajanukul Institute from GO group and FMRT from NGO group are the pioneers on this activity. We work together as a team. It is a hard work and quite impossible to get either national or international support. So, FMRT has to stand on own feet to run all activities to support the ID people.

At the present time, the self-help strategy by FMRT is under research on the methodology of Self Help Care in Intellectual Disabled People. The first report will be presented in this seminar.

III. Expansion and Integration of the Intellectual Disability Services in GO and NGO

Currently, ID people are able to have the services from the centers organized by both GO & NGO.

Following is the list of the GO who provide ID services :

Ministry of Public Health

- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Medical Services
- Undersecretary office

University Affair

- University Hospital

Ministry of Education

- Special Education Division, Department of General Education
- Special Affair Division under Policy and Planning Office, Under secretary office

Ministry of Social Development and Human Security

- Department of Social Welfare

Non-Government Organizations (NGO) providing ID services :

- The Association for the Mentally Retarded of Thailand
- Saeng Swang Institute Foundation
- Parents Club for persons with Down Syndrome, Siriraj Hospital, Siriraj Medical

University

- Self Help of Autistic Parent Association
- The Foundation of Mental and Intellectual Disability

The services are widely expanded but there are some problems in the cooperation and disintegration due to the fact that there is no common organization to manage the variety of service, medical education, vocational and social training.

FMRT recognized the problems. FMRT has received some assistance from Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. FMRT is only one organization that provides a complete cycle of 4 categories of service (medical education, vocation, social training). However, the services have been expanded slowly with limited budget and finance.

IV. Nationwide Communication through Mass Media

The technology of intellectual disability rehabilitation has been more advanced and can ensure the intellectual disabled people. Public has recognized the problem of intellectual disabled and has increased the interest to this problem.

FMRT has tried to find the way to communicate to the public for the recognition of the ID problem, method of prevention, promotion, cure, and rehabilitation. The communications have been done through mass media, publications / books, journal, and also through radio, television, etc.

E-mail : fmrth@ksc.th.com / Internet Website : www.fmrth.com

From the result of mass media communication, we found that the people understand, advocate and self practice.

V. Rural Development and Primary Health Care Program

Health for All, All be Healthy is the Thai motto. 1.2 Million ID people need to have good physical health, mental health, spiritual health, and social well being.

For more than 20 years, Thailand has been working on rural development and primary health care program in knowledge and behavior development including the managerial activities. Medicine, education, vocation, and social behavior training have been integrated in the program with good result. Rural people also have learnt and practiced in the 4 categories as mentioned. There is some improvement in family planning. Labour process and newborn care also have been improved. 99% of new born were born in hospitals under obstetricians and well-trained nurses. They are brought for follow-up at the

Tambon health service center also under well-trained nurses. Every intellectual disabled person is listed and taken care of.

FMRT has joined this program with limitation in manpower and financial offering. Therefore, we have built up the volunteer and advocating group. Also, we have a training program in some areas in Thailand such as Karnchanaburi, Suratthani, Nakornrajsima, Chantaburi, in the North, Northeast, and Southern part of Thailand. We have been trying to have the overall coverage.

VI. Developing and Strengthening the Community Management and Public Relation at the Village Level

With the problem of under-coverage, FMRT has joined with the provincial health office and the advocating group started with meeting, planning, and cooperating. Currently, the activities at the village level are applied in the particular area such as Pathumthani, Nakornnayok, Udonthani, Chiangmai, and Songkhla province. Still, this active program is in a long way to have the coverage throughout the country.

VII. Building the Relationship throughout the Whole Country and Internationally

FMRT has attempts to build the relationship nationally by the national conference arrangement, publication, and public relation through mass media. However, there is a limitation of financial support. We really appreciate the Committee of Asian Conference on Intellectual disability for giving us an opportunity to create this international relationship. Moreover, we really hope for the continuity in this relationship.

VIII. Researching on the Methodology of “Self Help Care” for Intellectual disabled People

“Self care is the best care.” ID people know their own problem and they are energetic in solving the problem and proud for helping their family. FMRT wants to find out the strategy for building up “Self Help Care”. We are under research with hope that there will be the way to solve this ID problem all over the country.

From the concept of Democracy : By the People, For the People, and Belong to the People, the intellectual disabled people will have a better chance to learn more, to do more, and to be more successful in intellectual disability care.

“Intellectual disabled people will have more opportunity to gain the quality care. The amount of Intellectual disabled people will be reduced continuously.”

IX. Empowering Volunteers and Family on the Self Management for Improvement of Intellectual disability Country Program

Empowering volunteer and family of the ID person is essential for covering and improving our services. Volunteers and ID family group are assigned to treat and to have activities with the intellectual disabled people, such as visiting, educating, training, understanding, advising, cheering, etc. Volunteer and family group are helping in connecting, associating, and financing to intellectual disabled people and their families. At this moment, FMRT has built connection with more than 300 volunteers and family groups.

X. Development of Thai Massage Application to Intellectual Disabled People for Solving, Physical, Mental, and Psychiatric Problems

Thai massage technique has been applied to intellectual disabled group for solving physical, mental, and psychiatric problems. Thai massage techniques give benefit to health mainly on nerve stimulation, increase of arterial and venous circulation, muscular relaxation, which helps increasing circulation especially in brain. If we can apply the massage technique to the younger age group, the development of brain can be improved. Moreover, massaging would bring parents to have a closer relationship with their intellectual disabled child and to make them understand each other better. Thus, it would help in solving psychiatric problem and socialization.

In our country, the law for the right of people with disabilities has been established. We all hope that in the near future, the number of intellectual disabled people would be reduced and the problems also would be decreased. The services for intellectual disabled people would be more developed and expanded throughout the whole nation and hopefully throughout the world by Asian Federation on Mental Retardation.

XI. Close relationship to the AFMR and world organizations

The intellectual disability is moving to the universe. Thailand is one of the members of Asian Federation on Mental Retardation. There are several ways of connection by communicating through E-mail (fmrth@ksc.th.com) and the internet website (www.fmrth.com). Once in a while there are foreigner visits, technology exchange, and financial assistances. We hope for Asian Federation of Mental Retardation Journal for a closer relationship and knowledge exchange among member countries and other related organizations in the world.