

Country Report
Mental Retardation in Thailand

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Mental Retardation in Thailand

Thailand is occupying an area of about 200,000 s.q miles in the Southern Asia Continent. The population is 47 million and more than 93% of Thai majorities are adherents to Buddhism.

The following report offered to the services for the mentally retarded in Thailand.

Mental retardation is not common illness, it is not able to cure but it needs to have prevention, promotion, rehabilitation and helping until the patients can learn to live independent, enjoy life and get along with their families and community as well, so there are many services for them.

In Thailand, there are three government organizations responsible to provide services for the mentally retarded:

1. Ministry of Public Health

Serious study of mental retardation in Thailand began with a survey of the World Health Organization in 1959, which indicated the existence of some 250,000 mentally retarded, about 1% of the total population of the country at that time. The government realized the necessity of public assistance for them, established an institute for the purpose in 1960, it is an agency of the Department of Medical Services under the Ministry of Public Health, opened its services for the care, treatment and training with about 20 retarded persons in 1962 and now it is called Rajanukul Hospital and Training School.

The aim of the institute is to give medical and psychiatric care in the hospital section and education and training in the school section.

The hospital has the staffs who work for the out-patient and in-patient such as psychiatrist, physician, psychologist, social worker, nurse etc. The out-patient is about 7,000 per year (the new patient is 600-700 per year) and the in-patient is 550 children (residents and daycare, age from 4-18 years). The residents are separated in boy's, girl's, small children's and multiple handicapped's ward. The averages of 50-60 children live in each of the nine dormitories.

A special school conducts teaching academic subjects as well as training these handicapped children to help themselves in every day life, especially in communication and orientation with other people. There are ten classrooms, limited 12 students for each one, pre-school and elementary level, and separate class for educable and trainable.

The institute also provides vocational training in various type of handicrafts such as

weaving, carpentry work, metal work, coat hangers, sewing, paper artificial flowers, cushion rug-doll and domestic work that include cooking, laundry etc.

In 1969, a site for vocational training centre for adolescent retarded male age after 18 was set up in the outskirts of Bangkok. It is a half-way home. The training has been formed on carpentry, metal work, ceramics, some agriculture – raising of chicken, pigs and fish, growing some plants and vegetables.

Moreover, the new vocational training centre for female adolescent is being prepared, it may be opened next year.

And now the hospital is extending its work of mentally retarded services into community that associated with the basic work of public health and welfare.

The research work directed towards preventive measures with regard to mental retardation. It is hope in the future etiology of the mentally retarded will more clarified.

2. Ministry of Education

Services for slow learner falls under the auspices of Division of Special Education, and Department of General Education which provides special class in certain government school only. There are 7 schools that have slow learner class.

Apart from this, the supervisory unit Department of general Education has the course for giving special training to the teacher who will be the special education teacher in some government and voluntary schools such as school for the deaf, the blind and include the mentally retarded. After they are qualified, they have extra paid for incentive.

3. Ministry of Interior

The mentally retarded is responded by the Department of Public Welfare. Many years ago, it has no specific planned aid for this, it runs several homes for different purposes including the disabled. In the particular home for disabled was formed 5-6 children who are severe mentally retarded, so in 1977, 6 years ago, the welfare institute for mentally retarded was set up. Just now there are two welfare institutions for them.

The first institute reserves the children age from birth to 7 years. There are 236 children.

The second institute reserves the children age from 5-18 years. There are 400 children. The children are referred to these institutions by the division of public welfare in every cities in Thailand, most of them are abandoned, destitute, broken home or in low economic families. There are all kinds of the mentally retarded, especially severe and profound grade. The trainable and educable are provided vocational training (about

20-30 children) or sent to learn at special school for mentally retarded or at the local school(about 6 children).

The mentally retarded after 18 years will be sent to the welfare institute of vocational rehabilitation centre for the disabled or the welfare institute of the person who become destitute or have no work.

Besides these three government organizations, there are some non government organizations already set up.

The first one is Foundation for the welfare of the mentally retarded, was founded in 1963 with these aims:

- 1) To assist in the education and training of children who are mentally retarded.
- 2) To foster the study of and research into deficiencies of the mind and intelligence of children for educational and medical purposes.
- 3) To give co-operation to and co-ordinate efforts with government agencies and other organizations in Thailand and abroad, in the promotion of activities beneficial to the mentally retarded.

There are many projects such as home visitation, fund raising, sheltered workshop, the centre for the mentally retarded at the north and north-east of the country etc.

The foundation established a school, exclusively for the training of mentally retarded, accepts the children who are at the educable level with an I.Q of 50 between the age of 3 2/1 – 18 years. There are 100 children and can expand to 200-250 children at soon. The school has a vocational centre attached and kindergarten and elementary section.

Now there is a “home light project” for the severe, preschool aged 4-7 years. It is the daycare.

The second one is the Parent’s Association of the mentally retarded, opened in 1976 which now is the affiliate member of the International league of the societies for the mentally retarded. It is provided for unit daycare centre and carry on the sheltered workshop in the future (now there are about 5 children in the daycare).

The third one is Saengsawang Foundation, it reserves for training the mentally retarded age from 4-7 years. There are not more than 20 children.

All of these three non-government organization, the school or the daycare is the private school, so the parents pay fee. It may except for someone or paying less than the others for some mentally retarded who have problems.

In Thailand, there is no definite legislation for mental retardation and in compulsory education act, they are exception for the handicapped of body and mind. This law should be reconsidered.