



CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Context

Although this thesis seeks to specifically focus on development efforts and actors as it relates to Peacebuilding, a very brief overview of the emergence of the conflict, focusing specifically on the contemporary context, will help to set the context of the conflict and the Development and Peacebuilding efforts being endeavored.

Since the incorporation of the independent sultanate of Patani in 1902 (comprising of the territories of the current provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and the western districts of Songkla) into then Siam, now Thailand, there has been a decades long history of attempted assimilation (on the part of the central government) and resistance (by local Muslim Malays, a majority in the region, however a minority group in national terms). These patterns of forced, or attempted, assimilation and then resistance have manifested themselves in various episodes and ways since 1902. This study, however, will specifically look to the most recent violent episode or 'uprising' that is considered to have started in the beginning of 2004.

This dramatic turning point occurred on January 4th of 2004 when “unidentified groups of armed men simultaneously torched 20 schools and killed four soldiers while stealing more than 100 guns from an army camp in Narathiwat.” For many, this incident finally confirmed previous suspicions, officially marking the date of the modern resurgence of violent insurgency in the deep south (Thanet Aphornsuvan, 2006: 93). Even despite the event of these dramatic and coordinated attacks, then Prime Minister Thaksin still tried to play down the political nature of the violence, “saying [that] it was just the work of gangsters or ordinary thieves, [however, this time] the public and the media thought otherwise” (Thanet Aphornsuvan, 2006: 9394). This avoidance of the fundamental political core of the conflict is one that would continue to contribute to increased violence in the southernmost three provinces of Thailand. Since then, 'resistance' or 'insurgent' violence has been

characteristically targeted against central government figures- military, police, and state education facilities and personnel.

Currently, many international aid agencies seek to contribute to Development and Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand, yet recent investigation suggests that there are still many shortcomings in the realization of meaningful contributions to Peacebuilding (Burke, 2011). Although development agencies and organizations through their work have the potential to contribute to and support peace work, the reality is that developmental contributions to situations of conflict are not always nor are necessarily 'positive' or 'effective' ones, as many mainstream actors (such as the WB, UNDP, and ADB) struggle to operate in this situation of complex emergency (Burke, 2011). Strategically limited in terms of 'spaces for action' (Bigdon and Korf, 2004) due to government fears primarily of emboldening violent rebel groups or encroaching on national sovereignty, it has been suggested that many foreign development agencies are reluctant or feel restricted to pursue Development strategies aimed toward structural and social change and often fall short in the integration of Peacebuilding into their approach to Development in the southern Thailand (Burke, 2011).

Meanwhile, violence and insecurity continues, with already over 4,600 people killed and over 7,500 injured since the resurgence of violence in 2004 (Srisompob Jitpiromsri, 2011). With many development actors and organizations seeking avenues to contribute to the peacebuilding process mostly through Track III (civil society based) methods, there can be benefit found in an examination of current strategies and implementation of peace work through development actors in southern Thailand. Given the difficulty and limited reliable capacity for evaluating the impacts of specific conflict interventions in dynamic and complex situations of violent conflict, and considering the suggestion that "the greatest impact of donors in Thailand has come through gradually building institutions and attitudes across many projects and programs, rather than through the direct results of specific initiatives" (Burke, 2011: 228); a 'thinking-action approach' (Eguren, 2011) concerning the conceptualization of pathways for Development's contribution to Peacebuilding, specifically through an

examination into the specific Development approaches (ie. empowerment) and Peacebuilding objectives (ie. Conflict Transformation) will be studied in application through The Asia Foundation's Deliberative Dialogue Program (DDP).

1.2 Research Objectives

This thesis seeks to:

- 1) To understand how Development in Southern Thailand can be understood as a contribution to Peacebuilding.
- 2) To understand how TAF's DDP can be understood as contributing to Development and Peacebuilding.

1.3 Research Questions

Research Question 1: How can Development in southern Thailand be understood as a contribution to Peacebuilding?

Research Question 2: How can TAF's DDP be understood as contributing to Development and Peacebuilding?

1.4 Research Methodology

This research comprises of a combination of secondary sources along with qualitative primary sources. Various theoretical frameworks and arguments of scholars help structure and support the analysis, in an attempt to better describe and understand what is happening on the ground. Further, semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with TAF staff (project officers and directors). These interviews took place both at TAF's country office in Bangkok and in the field; the content focused on TAF's theory of change, program strategies and objectives. as a way to confirm, clarify, and go into more depth with regard to TAF's overall approaches to Peacebuilding and Development in southern Thailand as well as to provide specific details with regard to TAF's DDP- its history, current and future projections, as well as their understanding of its role in the peacebuilding process in

southern Thailand. Staff interviews also asked details of the history of TAF, as well as details into their program and their relationship with their local partners.

Interviews conducted with four of the ten local CSOs that work with TAF on its DDP serve to provide a deeper, more fully illustrative understanding of the relationship between TAF and its local partners. Observational research was conducted, within the span of two weeks, by means of attendance and observation at three of TAF's local partner's forums provided insight into the manifestation of empowerment, social change, and the quality of these dialogue forums by looking to the process and agenda setting as well as the content of the forum to give insights into the degree and nature of these concepts.

1.5 Scope of Research

The scope of this research centers on the work of TAF in what is often referred to as the 'deep south' or 'southern border provinces' of Thailand (namely, the provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani), and specifically as it relates to TAF's DDP carried out in these three provinces. Interviews with local partners and observations of Deliberative Dialogue forums took place in Pattani, Yala, and Songkla¹.

1.6 Significance of Research

In Paffenholz's (2011: 282) "Understanding the conflict-development nexus and the contribution of development cooperation to peacebuilding", the author concludes calling for "the need for the conflict analysis/peacebuilding research and practitioner field to understand that development policies should be an integral part of the conflict resolution/peacebuilding agenda." Additionally, she warns the development community that "peacebuilding cannot be simply added to the existing menu of development policy and operational choices, leaving all else unchanged,"

¹ although the forums in Yala and Songkla showed attendees from all three provinces- Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani

(Paffenholz, 2011: 282). Considering these recent conclusions for Development and Peacebuilding, further research and analysis into integrated development-peacebuilding contributions and approaches to situations of complex situations of emergency and violent conflict could prove to be useful and relevant for both researcher and practitioner of Development and Peacebuilding alike.

Additionally in terms of the conflict of this study, recent empirical data on the violence, researched and released by the Deep South Watch (Srisompob Jitpiromsri, 2011), shows that although after 2007 violent incidents saw a decline, as recent as November 2010 (recorded up until February of 2011) an increase in violent incident has been the trend. Over the span of the past 7 years, 10,660 incidents of violence producing 4,631 casualties and 7,505 injuries and overall 12,126 victims makes the southernmost region of Thailand “one of the most sensitive areas in the world” (Srisompob Jitpiromsri, 2011). Not only considering casualties and victims, which on its own is significant, but also considering the continued peripheral nature of this conflict along with the continued perpetuation of violence, this specific conflict is of particular concern and significance.

Moreover, the this study’s focus on TAF in southern Thailand responds to The World Bank’s 2011 World Development Report, entitled ‘Conflict, Security, and Development’, that raises many barriers to peace that challenge the conventional practices and strategies of the international communities’ efforts to respond to conflict in ‘fragile states’. Among its conclusions and recommendations is the recognition that conflicts are not ended quickly, as they note it takes ‘a generation’ to build “effective and legitimate institutions,” (The World Bank, 2011). This speaks to *long-term, structural* approaches to remedying conflicts that need further attention, study, and refinement, as opposed to solely investing in conflict settlements that leave the underlying issues much unresolved. TAF’s decades of work and experience in southern Thailand have benefited them with relationships not easily won in isolated projects and programs of a few years’ time. Additionally, in Burke’s (2011: 219) study on the topic of foreign aid and Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand, TAF was noted as one of the organizations analyzed (amongst UNDP, World Bank, ABD, and

more) as having made a “small but significant” impact, through “continued small yet valuable steps” in the direction of Peacebuilding (Burke, 2011: 234). Therefore, looking to TAF’s example of work, in analyzing their contribution to Peacebuilding will be especially illustrative in terms of pathways to structural transformation not only in terms of the conflict that are concerned not only with the de-escalation and end of violence, but further the creation of a dynamic state of peace and Development that takes justice (procedural and substantive) into high consideration and priority.