

# **Training of the trainers for strengthening local Government Capacity on foresight project**

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### **Introduction**

Thailand is urbanizing rapidly, and by the year 2010, it is expected that the percentage will reach close to 40%. More importantly, Thailand will encounter to experience numerous health and environmental issues from this unprecedented urbanization.

The health status of the city residents is largely dependent upon their living conditions and lifestyle. The factors in our everyday life, which significantly influence our health status, are called “health determinants”. Health determinants include water supply, sanitation, nutrition, food safety, health services, housing conditions, working conditions, education, lifestyles, population changes, income and so on. They are physical, social and economic environments that surround the city residents.

The way in which health determinants affect the city resident is complex. However, the control of health determinants is often outside the responsibility and capacity of the health sector. Therefore, in order to take effective action to solve the urban health problems, it is necessary to integrate the effort of various sectors. These sectors include not only the health and other departments of governments, but also non-governmental organizations, private companies as well as the communities themselves. Developing this integrated, intersectoral approach with community participation is an important feature of healthy city initiatives.

The healthy city concept based on health promotion and using an socio-environmental model of health, aims at putting health issues on to urban development agendas at the municipal level. Healthy city projects were initially implemented in developed countries, but in the late 1990 started in developing countries. The healthy city projects are designed to strengthen the capability and capacity of municipal governments and to provide opportunities for individuals, families and community groups to deal with their environmental health problems.

The objectives of healthy city initiatives are to improve the health of city residents through improve living conditions and better health services in association with various urban developments activities. An important intention of a healthy city initiative is to bring together the partnership of the public, private and voluntary sectors to focus on urban health and to tackle health issues in a broad participatory.

A healthy city commits to a process of trying to achieve better physical and social environment and maintenance of physical and social environment which support and promote better health and quality of life for residents. Building health considerations into urban development and management is crucial for healthy cities.

In Thailand, the World Health Organization has started the implementation of healthy cities since 1995. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) identified three districts within Bangkok in which to start a healthy city project in 1995 and later on extended to other districts. Currently, All 50 districts have implemented healthy city projects. Mahidol University, Faculty of Public Health in collaboration with The Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health and WHO in 1997 launched a major new initiative of HCP in five different cities in Thailand. Two key objectives were emphasized on the project, one was to mobilize participation and

networks between government and private sectors and the other was to improve health through enhanced living conditions in key settings (namely housing, workplace, school and food outlets). Key features of a healthy city project include high political commitment, intersectoral collaboration inclusive planning community participation, and integration of activities in element setting, development of local action plan, Monitoring and evaluation.

Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, undertook this evaluation of the project in 2000 as an external evaluation in collaboration with the project coordinators in each city. The findings showed that the healthy city initiatives have been implemented in many cities in Thailand but its outcome has not been favorable. Further studies have shown that the weakness in urban planning is one of the limiting factors for the success of the operation. Moreover, cities can not be function effectively without effective urban management. There is a need for more effectiveness training in urban planning and city management.

In 2001, The Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Center for Technology Foresight initiated a project on training of the trainers. This project generally aimed at strengthening local government capacity on foresight to improve the quality and effectiveness of the training in urban planning and management.

## **2. Objectives**

The general objective of this project was to improve the quality and effectiveness of the training in urban planning and management. The specific objectives included:

- 2.1. To develop a course manual for training on healthy city initiatives
- 2.2. To develop a guideline for training on scenario planning.
- 2.3. To provide the participants with the basic knowledge and skills for healthy city planning.

## **3. Program components**

This project aimed at assisting local government officers to gain more effective means to meet the challenges of planning and managing cities. Specifically, then key concept of effective urban scenario planning techniques and developments of strategies to guide city developments were introduced. This study was divided into three phases.

The first phase dealt with preparation of manual for instruction on healthy city. The manual consisted of a body of knowledge on healthy city concepts and instructional activities for resource persons and participants. The course manual consisted of the following topics:

1. Local government capacity building approaches
2. Urban growth: trends and issues
3. Concept and techniques of sustainable urban development
4. Vision formulation
5. Scenario planning
6. Strategic planning
7. Techniques to be a facilitators
8. Concepts of health promotion

A variety of instruction activities with emphasis on participant centered included lectures, case study, and working group discussion. An interactive mode of learning were emphasized; to facilitate the exchange of experiences, practices and

concerns, especially among the participants who had a variety of practical experiences and responsibilities.

The second phase involved with the conducting a five-day workshop in Bangkok to strengthen the local government capacity on scenario planning. The workshop attended by 24 core officers, who worked at the local administrations in Bangkok, Nakhonratchasima, Prayao, Panutnikom and Yala provinces. It was expected that these core participants would become facilitators to conduct a similar workshop at their offices to create a critical mass on scenario planning concept. Evaluation by all participants at the end of the workshop shows high achievement and satisfaction. They trusted that the scenario concept could be applicable to the planning process in urban city development. More importantly, Officers from Panutnikom City agreed to organize a similar workshop to expand the concept to other sectors.

The third phase aimed at monitoring and evaluating activities undertaken by trained participants. A visit was made to the entire city involved in training earlier. Data was gathered from City Mayors and heads of project management as well as participants. Findings showed that respondents at all levels recognized the importance of scenario planning in city development process but the concept was not widespread and they found its difficulty in communicating and understanding among officers in other sectors. Therefore, it was not easily applicable to substitute the current planning process. However, as an individual participant, this concept was used whenever it could be utilized. In interviewing the provincial governors in those five participating provinces, it was found that the governors agreed to experiment the scenario planning process in the city development plan about the concept should be introduced to all the sectors involved.

A two-day workshop was conducted at Panutnikom City where 19 participants from all the sectors planning attended. Evaluation among participants showed their high degree of attendance and satisfaction. The city Mayor who played an important role in the workshop expressed his gratitude and appreciation for attending the workshop.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

A manual for teaching facility on scenario planning to be used for healthy city planning has been developed and revised for officers of all levels. It can be used as a reference for reviewing its concepts and process. Scenario planning proved to be an effective tool to create participation among both primary and secondary stakeholders. However, the concept has not been widespread among them so the use is limited. Participants successfully gained substantial benefits from its concepts and application but the numbers of participants trained who will be fully applied this usual concept were limited.

It is therefore recommended that the training should be continued at various levels in the urban city. Furthermore, the national linkages among stakeholders should be established to exchange their competencies and experiences to obtain a maximum performance of scenario planning. Finally, the mechanism during the planning process to encourage community participation to gain more solicit views should be established.

Faculty of Public Health and APEC Center for Technology Foresight will maintain this mandate to strengthen the active healthy city activities in Thailand.