

People's Empowerment Foundation

มูลนิธิศึกษภาพชุมชน



Report on

**The Thai Civil Society National Process on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations
(ASEAN)**

From September 6 – November 29, 2008

Submitted to

Department of ASEAN Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

By

People's Empowerment Foundation

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1. Overall Report on the 2008 Thai Civil Society National Process on ASEAN

People's Empowerment Foundation organized 10 Civil Society discussion forums on ASEAN throughout the country, during September 6 - November 29, 2008. This project is supported by SEARCH Canada, the Department of ASEAN Affairs attached to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United States Embassy in Thailand.

Table of Civil Society Discussion Forums on ASEAN					
Date	Location	Province	Coordinator	Region/Number of Participants	Number of Provinces
6-7 Sept 08 (Nat'l. Consultation)	CODI: Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization)	Bangkok	People's Empowerment Foundation	All regions/102 participants	35
25 Sept 08	Ratchamangala University	Kalasindhu	Mr. Somchai Pongsai, Grassroots Development Institute (GDI) - E-sarn region	Central E-sarn/102 participants	6
26 Sept 08	Dong Bang Sub-district Administration Organization	Amnatjaroen	Mr. Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio - E-sarn region	Lower E-sarn/40 participants	2
12 Oct 08	Nontaburi Provincial Administration Organization Office	Nontaburi	Miss Sureerat Nontachoke, Vice Chairwoman of GDI-Central region, Nontaburi Mrs. Kulnipa Punton, Rungsit Labor Union	Central region/92 participants	7

19 Oct 08	Sri Chonlatarn Temple, Mae Rim District	Chiang Mai	Mr. Winit Chaichit, GDI-Northern region Mr. Harn (MAP), Ethnic Group	Northern region/57 participants	4
30 Oct 08	Ratchaburi Provincial Administration Organization Office	Ratchaburi	Mr. Kriangkrai Shechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment - Ratchaburi	Western region/38 participants	6
8 Nov 08	Siam Thani School, Muang District	Surat Thani	Mr. Decho Tek-or-tong, GDI-Southern region	Upper Southern region/30 participants	3
9 Nov 08	Ban Kuan School Muang District	Satun	Mr. Rahman Liseng, Southern Community	Lower Southern region/54 participants	5
22 Nov 08	CODI: Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization)	Bangkok	Miss Sukarnta Sukpaita, Rungsit Labor Union	Bangkok and adjacent provinces/38 participants	3
29 Nov 08	Ratchapat Ratchanakarin University, Chacherngsao	Chachoengsao	Mr. Kan Tuttiyakul, Eastern Network	Eastern region/27 participants	5
Totals	10 forums			580 participants	41 provinces

Working Process:

1. An initial forum was arranged to achieve mutual understanding of objectives and to discuss the methods with which to provide a body of knowledge on ASEAN issues to people in all regions of Thailand. The 102 participants consisted of members from labor groups, slum groups, community radio networks, agricultural networks, student groups, and ethnic groups from throughout the country. A working committee for each sub-region was established.
2. Delegates from each area were selected to participate in a one-week training course aimed at providing sufficient knowledge about ASEAN to then be taught to other members of civil society. The 11 delegates are Miss Usawadee Chaoprae, Mrs. Kulnipa Puntan, Miss Sureerat Nontachoke, Mr. Kriangkrai Shechuang, Mr. Pornpipat Wat-aksorn, Pradittha Pariyakaewfa, Mr. Sitthisak Sassanasopa, Mr. Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Miss Watchara Yindeelarp, Mr. Tossapol Sangchart and Mr. Niphon Sewatadul.
3. Documents and Power Point presentations on the overall image of ASEAN, the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN 3 Action Plans, the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, and ASEAN civil society were prepared for each forum. Forums in 7 regions were organized through cooperation with each working committee.
4. Nine civil society discussion forums were held in locations throughout the country. In each, training was provided and community recommendations were collected.
5. People's Empowerment Foundation had the opportunity to exchange ideas about ASEAN issues in the strategic forum with Community Radio network in the Northern region at Ban Tharn Kaew. Topics covered included the overall image of ASEAN, the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN 3 Action Plans, the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, ASEAN civil society, and the Chair of the 14th ASEAN Summit Meeting. In addition, the foundation provided the community radio network in the Northern region with key ASEAN documents to be used for public relations purposes. All participants showed great interest and were appreciative of the foundation for the ASEAN information.
6. People's Empowerment Foundation attended the civil society workshop on the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), held by the NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-COD) in the Northern region. Discussions included the operation of the ASEAN Civil Society Discussion Forum in the Northern region.
7. Outcomes of the completed civil society discussion forums were assessed, and arrangements have been made in preparation for the parallel civil society conference to be held within a week of the ASEAN Summit Meeting.

Outcome:

Though a restricted budget allowed for only 580 total participants in the national process, all were eager to expand their knowledge about ASEAN issues. During the forums, attendees were given key information about ASEAN's background, the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN 3 Action Plans, the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, and ASEAN civil society.

As a result, participants are now able to relate prior concerns about their livelihoods and ways of life to ASEAN matters, a connection that was previously seldom recognized. Most have come to the important realization that, in addition to being members of their local and national communities, they are also members of a larger ASEAN society. Thus, as Thailand will be the host of the upcoming ASEAN Summit Meeting, attendees showed an eagerness to participate in the parallel civil society meeting.

Participants also expressed the desire to arrange additional small programs on ASEAN in their areas, supporting budgets permitting. It is agreed that the establishment of an ASEAN civil society network is also needed in order to facilitate the continued exchange of ideas and knowledge. Furthermore, it is expected that civil service and educational institutions, such as the Sub-district Administration and Rajabhat University, will implement regular programs to provide widespread knowledge of ASEAN. Therefore, ASEAN governments, as well as the Office of the ASEAN Secretary-General, should provide assistance for such programs.

The strength of an ASEAN society cannot be developed and sustained without continuous participation from the ASEAN people. For this to occur, sufficient support is needed.

People's Empowerment Foundation**December 7, 2008**

2. Report on the National Consultation on the ASEAN National Process

Saturday, September 6 – Sunday, September 7, 2008

The conference was held in a conference room at CODI: Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization)
912 Navamintra Road, Klongjun, Bangkapi District, Bangkok 10240

Objectives:

1. Provide background knowledge about ASEAN
2. Discuss plans for the civil society discussion forums on ASEAN
3. Provide information about participating in the parallel civil society meeting during the ASEAN Summit Meeting in December (Now postponed until February 2009)

Target Groups:

Approximately 102 delegates representing grassroots community organizations from several regions in Thailand. These delegates will be the mainstays for promoting community-level engagement with ASEAN issues.

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3. Program for the National Consultation on the ASEAN National Process

September 6, 2008

- 09:00 Opening ceremony and Keynote speech: “Introduction to ASEAN Civil Society and the ASEAN People’s Participation,” by Mr. Wittaya Sujaritthanarak, former Director of the Asia Study Institute at Chulalongkorn University
- 09:30-12:00 Background: Part I
- Knowledge of ASEAN, by Ambassador Surapong Chaiyanam
 - The importance of ASEAN and Thailand as the host of the ASEAN Summit Meeting, by Mr. Manussawe Srisodapol, Deputy Director of ASEAN Affairs Department
 - ASEAN and its affect on ASEAN people, by Mr. Kavee Jongkitthaworn, *The Nation*
- Moderator: Mrs. Chalida Tajaroensuk, People’s Empowerment Foundation
- 12:00-13:00 Lunch
- 13:00-15:00 Background: Part II
- ASEAN Visions 2020
 - The Vientiane Action Program
 - The ASEAN Charter and The ASEAN People’s Charter
 - The ASEAN Blueprint
- by Pokpong Laowannasiri, Forum Asia and Mrs. Chalida Tajaroensuk, People’s Empowerment Foundation
- Moderator: Mr. Akkarin Tuansiri, MA Student from the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University
- 15:00-15:30 Tea/Coffee Break
- 15:30-17:30 ASEAN Civil Society Forum
- The ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC), the ASEAN People’s Assembly (APA), by Pokpong Laowannasiri, the Regional Working Committee for the ASEAN People’s Forum
 - Experiences on the ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) and future visions, by Miss Sugarnta Sukpaita, Rungsit and Nearby Trade Union Group
 - The ASEAN People’s Forum, by a delegate from NGO-COD

- Moderator: Bunjong Siri, Thai Allied for Human Resource Development in Rural Asia (Thai DRA)

September 7, 2008

- 9:00-12:00 Sub-group discussions:
1. The ASEAN Human Rights Body and the ASEAN 3 Action Plans
 2. International strategic cooperation (the ASEAN Civil Society Conference, the ASEAN People's Forum, the ASEAN People's Assembly, and the ASEAN Summit Meeting)
 3. Goals for the civil society discussion forums on ASEAN
- 12:00-13:00 Lunch
- 13:00-14:00 Discussion of the outcome of the sub-group meetings
- 14:00-15:00 Separate into sub-groups by each area; plan the civil society discussion forums on ASEAN (the working committee, places, topics and methods)
- 15:00-15:30 Tea/Coffee Break
- 15:30-17:00 Discussion about plans for the civil society discussion forums on ASEAN
- 17:00-17:30 Conclusion
- Moderator: Mrs. Chalida Tajaroensuk and Bunjong Siri

Summary of National Consultation Outcome:

The participants now understand the following:

1. Southeast Asian civil society existed for a long time before the establishment of the ASEAN body. In the past, the absence of national boundaries allowed for freedom of trade, movement, and cooperation among the people of Southeast Asia. Traditions and cultures were continually exchanged throughout the shared geography for centuries. Though many different religions and beliefs existed, conflict was minimal. However, as a result of the area's abundance of natural resources, more militarily powerful countries occupied parts of the region for the benefit of their trade.
2. The ASEAN region consists of 2 parts – the ASEAN governments and the ASEAN people – that have had many differences of opinion and understanding regarding the ASEAN working process. In the past, ASEAN affairs have been carried out strictly by member states, which have conducted activities with minimal involvement from the people. Thus, implementation of policy has been a top-down process in which governments determine policy while people are restricted from access to all key areas of decision-making. Due to this system, as well as a relative lack of resources and knowledge among the people, a large gap exists between ASEAN's two parts.
3. ASEAN was established 41 years ago on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand by the five original member countries – Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore. Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.
4. As ASEAN nations represent several different political and economic systems, the “1-4-4-1 Form” has been adopted among civil society as a tool to remember each country's system. Thus, the first “1” represents Brunei Darussalam's absolute monarchy, the first “4” signifies the democracies of Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia (each nation with its own particular system), the second “4” stands for the dictatorship or socialist systems of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, and the last “1” denotes Singapore's single party-controlled democracy. With such a diversity of political and economic opinions, negotiations among member states are at times sensitive and difficult, creating challenges to the maintenance of unity and mutual agreement.
5. The key principles of ASEAN are non-interference, consensus, non-use of force, and non-confrontation. Collectively, the principles guarantee that all member states are free to implement domestic policies without the threat of interference by neighboring states. However, these principles are also used as political tool when human rights violations occur. As a result, human rights abuses in such countries as Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have been dangerously ignored.
6. This year is a significant year for Thailand because of the following 4 reasons:

1. Thailand will be the host of the 14th ASEAN Summit Meeting from 15-18 December 2008 (now postponed until 27 February- 1 March 2009).
2. It is expected that the 10 member states will ratify the ASEAN Charter and announce its implementation during the Summit Meeting. The Thai government will also hold the 15th ASEAN Summit Meeting at the end of 2009.
3. Mr. Surin Pitsuwan will be the ASEAN Secretary-General until the end of 2012.
4. Thai civil society will host the 4th ASEAN Civil Society Conference from 12-14 December 2008 (rescheduled for February 20-22).
7. For the past 40 years, ASEAN member states have joined together as an official organization with clear principles. However, as ASEAN has been actively challenged in various international forums, the new ASEAN Charter has been constructed for the following 3 reasons:
 1. To establish ASEAN as an official legal entity with a strong role in international conferences
 2. To establish the “ASEAN Community,” comprising of 3 pillars – the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
 3. To develop the ASEAN structure in order to strengthen the authority and efficiency of the Secretary-General
8. As Thailand will be the host of the 14th ASEAN Summit Meeting, Thai people must have sufficient knowledge about ASEAN to prepare for the parallel civil society conference to be held the same week.
9. The importance of Thailand holding the ASEAN Chair:
 - When the new ASEAN Charter takes into effect, Thailand will assume the Chair for the second time, the first being its current holding that began in July 2008.
 - Thus, Thai government will have the opportunity to play a major role in presenting their visions for ASEAN for an additional 12 months, totaling an unprecedented 18-month tenure in the leadership position.
 - The Chairperson will hold the position during a critical transition period in which, following the application of the ASEAN Charter, various changes will be made to the ASEAN structure.

- The Chairperson will help to draft the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, the first of its kind in Asia that will follow the international standards recognized in similar mechanisms from the Americas, Europe, and Africa.
- The Chairperson will promote civil society's participation in the ASEAN process.
- The Chairperson will work to ensure that ASEAN is a people-centered organization.
- The Chairperson will promote mutual cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund.
- The Chairperson will represent ASEAN at international gatherings and strengthen its negotiating power within the global community.
- In holding the Chair of ASEAN, Thailand's reputation and position in global political forums will be bolstered.
- There exists a new opportunity for Thai diplomatic confidence and trust to be restored.

10. The ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism:

ASEAN has yet to implement regional human rights mechanism similar to what already exists in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. According to Article 14 of the ASEAN Charter, an ASEAN Human Rights Body (AHRB) will be established and operated in accordance with the terms of reference determined at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore. During this meeting, the High Level Panel (HLP) was established to prepare the first draft of the AHRB for submission at the 14th ASEAN Summit Meeting.

The Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA) Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights submitted a proposal for the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism to the HLP (see an appendix 1). This non-governmental working group, in cooperation with the academic Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism and delegates from the ASEAN Human Rights Commission (4 National Human Rights Institutes), has monitored the work of the HLP since its initial stage. They also had the opportunity to meet with the HLP to present civil society's visions for and concerns about the AHRB.

Participants of National Consultation on the ASEAN National Process have endorsed the civil society proposal for the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, submitted to the High Level Panel.

11. The importance of ASEAN civil society:

If ASEAN wants to establish a common society with people at the center, it needs to focus on promoting widespread understanding of ASEAN among citizens of all member nations. Without proper knowledge about ASEAN and government policies, it is very difficult for people to support and legitimize their implementation. Thus, it is necessary for governments to recognize the importance of civil society's involvement in ASEAN affairs by

continuously working with, educating, and listening to the concerns and opinions of civil society members.

12. As ASEAN is supposed to address the interests of 10 countries in Southeast Asia, it needs to recognize the mutual interests of the people from all countries when constructing visions for the region. Thus, it is important for people and governments alike to think beyond their national identities and develop a regional perspective on key issues related to the welfare of all ASEAN people.

Civil Society Recommendations for ASEAN:

1. Provide an ASEAN passport for all ASEAN people so that they will be free to travel across borders without visa restrictions.
2. Review the decision of which ASEAN employs English as the official language, as it is very difficult for the more than 300 million ASEAN people who speak Indo-Malaysian languages to understand. Governments should translate various ASEAN documents into local languages that are understandable to their people.
3. More carefully consider civil society concerns in the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN 3 Action Plans. The people are concerned with the implementation of these major documents because they have had no involvement with their drafting. As a result, the documents have not sufficiently responded to the peoples' fundamental problems and needs.
4. Provide the people with increased and consistent knowledge about ASEAN.

Mutual Agreements for Action among Forum Participants

1. Organize civil society discussion forums on ASEAN in 10 sub-regions (held by People's Empowerment Foundation) to increase people's understanding of ASEAN issues, and establish an ASEAN civil society working group in each region.
2. Study and analyze the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN 3 Action Plans, and the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism in order to establish civil society's conclusions.
3. Work on public relations projects to disseminate plans to people at the local community level.
4. Closely monitor the activities of the governmental sector, the nongovernmental sectors, and ASEAN civil society itself.
5. One hundred participants from the national process will attend the parallel ASEAN civil society meeting to be held the same week as the ASEAN Summit Meeting in December 2008 (now postponed until February).

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4. Report on the Training Sessions for Trainers on ASEAN Matters

Held 9 -13 September 2008 at Saint Gabriel Center, Soi Tonglhor, Bangkok

Objectives

1. Equip trainees with information and knowledge about ASEAN matters
2. Instruct trainees on how to develop curricula that can be used for community level trainings
3. Provide trainees with the capacity to hold their own training sessions on ASEAN matters in 7 sub-regions

Program

9 September	10 September	11 September	12 September	13 September
<p>Morning: - History of ASEAN's institution - Questions and Answers</p> <p>Afternoon: - Small group discussions on the ASEAN Charter and the Three Community Blueprints - Presentations and summary</p>	<p>Morning: - Human rights standards and the Compatibility between international human rights standards and ASEAN's human rights mechanisms</p> <p>Afternoon: - Cooperation between civil societies and ASEAN - Strategies and issues in 2008 - The connection between ASEAN's human rights mechanisms and the ASEAN Charter, the 3 Blueprints, and the ASEAN Community</p>	<p>Training techniques</p> <p>Analyses</p> <p>Target Groups</p> <p>Components of curriculum designs</p> <p>Procedures and techniques for presentations</p>	<p>Techniques</p> <p>Course on the organization and design of workshops</p>	<p>Mock ASEAN training sessions by trainees</p>

Participants

1. Miss Usawadee Chaoprae, Program Staff, the People's Empowerment Foundation
2. Miss Sureerat Nantachoke, Vice President, Grassroots Development Institute
3. Mrs. Khun Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit and Nearby Area Trade Union Group
4. Mr. Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator of the Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Organic Agricultural Tracks, Umpang District

5. Mr. Nipol Sawettadul, Association of Community Organizations in the North-Eastern Provinces
 6. Miss Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Klong Toey Community Radio
 7. Mr. Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio Group
 8. Miss Pradittha Pariyakaewfa, Map Foundation
 9. Mr. Pornpipat Wad-Aksorn, Bho Nhok Community Radio
 10. Mr. Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment
 11. Mr. Sittisak Sassanasopa, Representative of Muslim communities
- Participants consist of 6 males and 5 females.

Participants were selected based on the following considerations:

Network type (for variation), equal or close-to-equal gender ratios, leadership potential, potential as effective trainers, public speaking skills, and candidates' willingness to learn and teach. All selected participants are local people from community organizations, with the exception of Miss Usawadee Chaoprae, a staff member from the People's Empowerment Foundation.

Knowledge and Information Provided to Trainees

Comprehensive information pertaining to ASEAN matters was presented, including an overview of ASEAN's establishment and history, the ASEAN Charter, the 3 Action Plans, the Human Rights Mechanism, ASEAN's relation to civil society, and human rights cornerstones. In addition, skills and techniques for effective training were taught, including how to design several types of courses and sessions, how to carry out evaluations, and what precautions to use in preparation for regional trainings.

Preparations for Civil Society Discussion Forum in each region

After 7 days of training, all participants will meet once again with the People's Empowerment Foundation to draft a common syllabus to be used in the community training sessions on ASEAN matters, clarify any doubt and question, prepare Power Point presentations, select an overall coordinator and community coordinators and define their roles and responsibilities, and manage financial issues according to budget plans. The first regional training platform will take place in the Kalasindhu Province on 25 September 2008.

People's Empowerment Foundation
21 September 2008

5. Content from the Civil Society Forums on ASEAN

The participants of each forum have gained the following knowledge:

1. Overview of ASEAN
 - Historical, political and economic background
 - Development
 - New challenges
 - The present ASEAN and the ASEAN Charter
2. The ASEAN Charter
 - Meaning
 - Reasons for implementation
 - Working process
 - Structure and contents
 - New ASEAN structure as a result of the ASEAN Charter
 - Comments
3. The ASEAN Blueprint and the 3 Pillars (Political-Security Community, Economic Community, and Socio-Cultural Community)
 - Principles and objectives of the ASEAN society
 - Conclusion on the 3 pillars
 - Comments
4. ASEAN Civil Society
 - Background
 - Forums/mechanism of ASEAN civil society's participation
 - Future direction
5. The ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism

- Principles and objectives of the ASEAN Charter for establishing the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism
- ASEAN civil society's proposal for the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism

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6. List of Facilitators

Topic: ASEAN Overview, etc.

Invited Facilitators:

Mr. Assada Chaiyanam	Former Ambassador
Mr. Kasit Piromya	Former Ambassador
Mr. Surapong Chaiyanam	Former Ambassador
Mr. Kavee Jongkitthaworn	Executive Editor, the Nation Newspaper
Mr. Manussawe Srisodapol	Deputy Director of ASEAN Affairs Department
Dr. Wittaya Sujaritthanarak	Former Director of Asia Study Institute of Chulalongkorn University
Pokpong Laowansiri	Forum Asia
Miss Sugarnta Sukpaita	Rungsit Labor Union
Mr. Jonathan Fox	People's Empowerment Foundation

Local Facilitators:

Mr. Kriangkrai Shechurang	Karen Network for Culture and Environment, Ratchaburi Province
Mr. Niphon Savettadul	Northeastern Community Organization, Nakorn Panom Province
Mr. Tossapol Sangchart	Northeastern Community Radio
Mr. Pornpipat Wat-aksorn	Bor Nok Community Radio
Mr. Sithisak Sassanasopa	Muslim Volunteer of People's Empowerment Foundation

Permanent Facilitators:

Mrs. Chalida Tajaroensuk	Director of People's Empowerment Foundation
Mr. Kriangsak Teerakowitkajorn	Program Manager of People's Empowerment Foundation
Miss Usawadee Chaoprae	Staff of People's Empowerment Foundation
Mrs. Kulnipa Puntan	Rungsit and Nearby Trade Union Group
Miss Watchara Yindeelarp	Youth Community Radio
Miss Sureerat Nontachoke	Vice Chairwoman of GDI-Central region, Nontaburi Province

Mr. Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti Coordinator of Preservation and Promotion Project on Non-toxic Agriculture in Umpang Area

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7. Civil Society Discussion Forums on ASEAN in Each Region

1. Northeastern Region: Ratchamangala University, Kalasin Province, 25 September 2008
Participants from Kalasin, Roi-ed, Mahasarakam, Nong Bua Lampoo, Loei and Khon Khaen
2. Northeastern Region: Dong Bung Administration Organization, Amnadjaroen Province, 26 September 2008
Participants from Amnatjaroen and Nakhon Panom
3. Central Region: Nontaburi Administration Organization, Nontaburi Province, 12 October 2008
Participants from Saraburi, Supanburi, Chainad, Ayutthaya and Ang Tong
4. Northern Region: Sri Chonlatharn Temple, Chiang Mai Province, 19 October 2008
Participants from Chiang Mai, Lumpoon, Pitsanulok and Utaradit
5. Western Region: Ratchaburi Administration Organization, Ratchaburi Province, 30 October 2008
Participants from Ratchaburi, Petchaburi, Samut Songkram, Samut Sakorn, Nakhon Pathom and Kanchanaburi
6. Upper Southern Region: Siam Thani Hotel, Muang District of Surat Thani Province, 8 November 2008
Participants from Surat Thani, Ranong and Krabi
7. Lower Southern Region: Wat Ban Kuan School in Muang District of Satul Province on 9 November 2008
Participants from Satul, Songkhla, Pattani, Narativas and Yala
8. Central Region and Bangkok: CODI: Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), Bangkok, 22 November 2008
Participants from Bangkok, Pathumthani, Nontaburi and Samut Prakarn
9. Eastern Region: Rajabhat Ratchanakarin University, Chachoengsao Province, 29 November 2008
Participants from Chachoengsao, Prachinburi, Rayong, Nakhonnayok and Chantaburi

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8. Summary of Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Civil Society Discussion Forums on ASEAN

8.1) The Northeastern Platform - Rajamangala University, Kalasindhu Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN - 25 September 2008

08.30-09.00	Registration
09.00-09.30	Welcoming speech and opening session , by Associate Professor Narong Polwong, Vice Chancellor of Rajamangala University of Technology Isan, Kalasindhu Campus
09.30-10.30	Presentation: “ASEAN Overview,” by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk, Director of People’s Empowerment Foundation
10.30-10.45	Coffee Break
10.45-12.00	Presentations - “ASEAN Charter,” by Khun Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio Group of the North-Eastern Provinces - “ASEAN: the Social, Cultural, Political and Security Dimensions,” by Nipol Sawettadul of the North-Eastern Provinces, Nakorn Panom Province - “ASEAN: the Economic Dimension,” by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks, Umpang District, Tak Province Moderator: Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit and Nearby Trade Union Group
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-13.15	Presentation: “Participation of Civil Society,” by Khun Tossapol Sangchart
13.15-14.00	Group Discussion Agenda - Issues and problems faced by each group - Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars - Civil society suggestions for ASEAN - Suggestions for bridging civil society networks
14.00-14.15	Coffee Break
14.15-15.50	Presentation of each group discussion
15.50-16.00	Presentation: “ASEAN’s Human Rights Mechanisms,” by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk
16.00-16.20	Summary and Conclusion of the Meeting, by Usawadee Chaoprae, People’s Empowerment Foundation

Issues and Suggestions Yielded from Group Discussions

Participants of the meeting were divided into 3 discussion groups: the farmers, the university students, and the community leaders. Each group discussed their most pressing issues and made

suggestions to ASEAN on how to address problems. Ideas about bridging civil society networks were also exchanged among all groups.

The Farmers

Issues:

The main problems currently faced by the farmers include negative health effects resulting from the use of expensive (and increasingly unaffordable) chemical fertilizers, lack of access to public utilities and water for agriculture, and high production costs combined with low incomes, all which contribute to growing poverty and indebtedness.

Suggestions:

This group recommends that ASEAN abolish taxes on fertilizer and, in order to stabilize incomes, support the capacity of farmers to collectively set market prices for rice.

The University Students

Issues:

University students expressed concerns over the general lack ASEAN-related information available to them in schools. As ASEAN continues to negotiate and implement policies, students often feel uninformed and thus left out of the ASEAN process.

Suggestions:

The students believe that it is necessary for universities to establish an ASEAN faculty to inform students who will in turn educate the public on ASEAN matters. As educational institutions, universities should utilize their resources in order to effectively spread knowledge about important processes that are affecting the people of Thailand and Southeast Asia.

The Community Leaders

Issues:

Community leaders raised several issues related to labor. For example, Laotian migrant workers are generally underpaid, with their wages falling well below the legal minimum. Thai laborers are also regularly exploited, earning wages that fail to meet the real (and rising) cost of living. In addition, concerns were raised about the high costs of production and low prices of final products, a combination that contributes to low worker pay. Other problems prevalent in the communities are a lack of capital for investments, drug use, weak networking systems, and an overall lack of political participation.

Suggestions:

The community leaders recommend that ASEAN create markets and set and control product quality, encourage and support political participation, protect the rights of migrant **workers**, create an ASEAN passport that will enable holders to travel freely in search of employment, establish people-to-people connections and organizations within ASEAN countries, and provide support for grassroots and community projects.

Forum Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

While participants of the forum recognize that the General Secretary of ASEAN is a Thai national to whom the Thai people should lend support during the upcoming ASEAN Summit, they also realize that ASEAN issues are not limited to international relations, as they concern the welfare of common citizens. The need to continuously educate Thai citizens on all matters pertaining to ASEAN is understood. Thus, forum participants suggest that People's Empowerment Foundation act as a facilitator for the creation of an ASEAN People's Working Committee, to be divided into 10 groups in order to cover several areas. In addition, the organization of small but continuous ASEAN projects in all regions is recommended to maintain strong communities.

Additional Statement from Forum Participant

There is an abundance of locals who are qualified and experienced but have not been given sufficient opportunities. By enabling people to come together for a common purpose, new knowledge and information can be exchanged and promoted. During the past 40 years, ASEAN could have benefited much more if only it had received sufficient public attention and participation. We would like people to be better informed and able to see ASEAN as a serious institution that presents tangible solutions to key problems. This request must be raised at the state level, and cooperation is needed from every sector of society. Such developments are for the good of the country. Knowledge must not be limited to certain groups; do pass it on.

8.2) The Northeastern Platform: Dongbang Tambol Administrative Organization, Leu-Amnart District, Amnatcharoen Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN - 26 September 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.30 **Welcoming speech and opening session**, by Khun Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio, the North-Eastern Provinces
- 09.30-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by Khun Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio, the North-Eastern Provinces
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-12.00 Presentations
- **“ASEAN Charter,”** by Khun Tossapol Sangchart, Community Radio, the North-Eastern Provinces
 - **“ASEAN: The Socio-Cultural, and Political-Security Dimensions,”** by Khun Nipol Sawettadul, CODI - Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), the North-Eastern Provinces, Nakornpanom Province
 - **“ASEAN: the Economic Dimension,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks, Umpang District, Tak Province
- Moderator:** Khul Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit Workers Area Group
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-13.15 Presentation: **“The Involvement of the Public Sector,”** by Khun Tossapol Sangchart
- 13.15-14.00 **Group Discussion Points**
- Issues and problems faced by each group
 - Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three
- Main Pillars
- Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
 - How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.00-14.15 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.50 **Presentation of each group discussion**
- 15.50-16.00 Presentation: **“ASEAN’s Human Rights Mechanisms,”** by Khun Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit and Nearby Trade Union Group
- 16.00-16.20 **Summary and Conclusion of the Meeting,** by Usawadee Chaoprae, The People’s Empowerment Foundation
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Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Group Discussion

Because there were only 40 participants in the meeting, all were grouped into a single discussion group. The majority of the meeting’s participants were sub-district (Tambol) inhabitants with very limited, if any, knowledge about ASEAN. After being given a background on ASEAN, the group discussed issues and problems related to the ASEAN framework, civil society suggestions for ASEAN, and suggestions on how to bridge civil society networks.

Issues:

Participants agreed that most problems faced by all villagers stem from high costs of production and low prices of final products, resulting in poverty and indebtedness. The widespread problem of migrant worker abuse was also a key topic of discussion.

In addition, as the ASEAN Charter primarily reflects a state-level agenda, the people feel that there are limited opportunities and incentives for civil society participation. Thus, considering this marginal position of the people along with differences among member states, it is believed that the goal of establishing a sustainable ASEAN community by 2015, set by governments of ASEAN, will not likely be met.

Suggestions:

To address the problem of high production costs and low product prices, it is suggested that villagers be allowed to collectively agree on standardized production processes and final product prices. In addition, the group recommends that ASEAN play a strong role in promoting the sustainability of natural resources.

Furthermore, it is believed that increased people's participation should be encouraged in order to work more effectively towards the goal of a strong ASEAN community. The group advises that the creation of a people's version of the ASEAN Charter would be a positive step towards such a community, as would active people's participation in border dispute settlement.

Lastly, the group believes that the establishment of an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism would greatly benefit all ASEAN people.

Forum Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

Forum participants suggest that several platforms for the exchange of opinions be established at the local level, that ASEAN community people's networks be established at all levels (local, national, regional), and that a common consciousness of peaceful coexistence be continuously promoted and cultivated.

8.3) The Central Platform: Provincial Administrative Organization, Muang District, Nontaburi Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 12 October 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.15 **VCD presentation and statement meeting's objectives**
- 09.15-09.30 Welcoming speech and special lecture: **“The Cooperation Between the Provincial Administrative Organizations and the People,”** by Khun Chatree Srisang, Deputy, Nontaburi Provincial Administrative Organization
- 09.30-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by the Former Ambassador H.E. Assada Chayanam
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-12.00 Presentations:
- **“The ASEAN Charter,”** by Khun Usawadee Chaoprae, Program Staff
 - **“Socio-Cultural Action Plan,”** by Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Networks for Culture and Environment
 - **“Political and Security Action Plan,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelap, Community Radio
 - **“Economic Action Plan,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks, Umpang District
- Moderator:** Ajarn Sureerat Nontachoke, The Farmer's Federations Association for Development, Central Region, Thailand
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-13.15 **“The Civil Society’s Participation and the Establishment of a Parallel People’s Platform,”** by Khun Jonathan Fox, the People’s Empowerment Foundation and Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Networks for Culture and Environment
- 13.15-14.00 **Group Discussion Points**
- Issues and problems faced by each group
 - Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars
 - Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
 - How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.00-14.15 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.50 **Presentation of each group discussion**
- 15.30-15.45 Presentation: **“ASEAN’s Human Rights Mechanisms,”** by Khun Kulnipa Pantan, Rangsit and Nearby Trade Union Group
- 15.45-16.00 **Conclusion** by Khun Jonathan Fox, the People’s Empowerment Foundation and Khun Usawadee Chaoprae (translator)
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Issues and Suggestions Yielded from Group Discussions

The meeting's participants consisted of a women's rights group, local youth, farmers, community media members, university students, and a labor group. During the meeting, People's Empowerment Foundation divided the participants into 4 groups: the women and youth group, the farmers group, the media group, and the student and labor group. Each discussed issues relevant to their communities, recommendations for the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars Action Plans, and suggestions on how to promote the bridging of civil society networks.

Women's Rights and Youth Group

Issues:

In the women's rights and youth group, women expressed concern over their marginalized position in society. For one, women are more likely to fall victim to physical and emotional abuse. When abused, women are unlikely to seek help or press charges against aggressors due to fears that they will be socially condemned for not safeguarding their chastity. Thus, many women suffer from injustices that are left unaddressed, or made worse, because of pervasive social norms. In addition, it was agreed that women face several forms of discrimination in the workplace. The low number of women holding political or executive positions in various professional fields is evidence of such. Furthermore, female laborers most often receive lower wages than their male counterparts, indicating that women experience problems similar to those of other underprivileged groups such as the elderly and disabled. For these reasons, the women's rights group believes that they are owed not only sympathy but also appropriate justice.

The youth in this group expressed concerns over deteriorating educational standards as well the spread of mass media-influenced consumerism. In particular, increasing priorities of consumption and material objects are thought to be contributing to social problems. In addition, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and under-age prostitution were identified as significant problems affecting the youth.

Suggestions:

In order to assert women's rights issues into ASEAN institutions, the women and youth group suggests that women's networks be established in every region. It is also recommended that, within Thailand, the role of women in society be promoted through the inclusion of female representatives in leadership positions in all sectors of society.

In addition, protection laws aimed at safeguarding the rights of those abused and discriminated, including women, children, or the socially deprived, should not only be passed but also strictly enforced.

The youth group would like to see strong government support for the education of children and youth by raising educational standards and guaranteeing free education for all. Alternative mass media, which helps to promote creativity, should also be promoted in order to provide additional options for the youth.

Farmers Group

Issues:

The farmers group expressed concerns about insufficient investment capital, labor shortages, increasing domestic and foreign competition, and low incomes resulting from the inability to control the prices of their products. All of these issues have led to widespread poverty and indebtedness. The group also conveyed opposition to the free trade policies of the ASEAN Charter, which they see as causing further problems. Importantly, the group believes that farmers still lack essential knowledge, as well as the means to expand their knowledge, about issues and policies that directly affect their livelihoods.

Suggestions:

Considering the above problems, it is suggested that more detailed information regarding ASEAN and its policies be publicized to farmers and people of all walks of life. In addition, producers within each ASEAN member country must be given the ability to unite and collectively make decisions with regard to production and prices.

Media Group

Issues:

The media group considers the limited freedom of the press as a significant problem. Press freedom is restricted by censorship of information and occasional threats of persecution during efforts to present information in a genuine and straightforward manner.

Suggestions:

The media group suggests that mechanisms be established to facilitate and protect freedom of the press. In particular, it is recommended that freedom of expression of the press be ensured. Rather than leaving media groups dependent upon advertising revenue for financial survival, relevant institutions should allocate sufficient resources to the press in order to encourage and support the long-term presentation of truthful and impartial information.

Student and Labor Group

Issues:

In the student and labor group, university students raised concerns over the limited provision of sufficient and important information regarding social problems. Though some students are introduced to political and social issues by their teachers, many are completely ignorant of problems facing populations in Thailand and Southeast Asia. This lack of attention and civic participation is thought to be a significant barrier to the possibility for social improvements.

Members representing laborers in this group expressed several concerns about the welfare of workers in the area, most related to exploitation and insufficient wages that do not account for the real cost of living. The group also regards the issue of migrant labor as directly related to ASEAN.

They state that the influx of migrant workers, combined with the absence of a reliable mechanism for migrant labor standards, has weakened Thai labor's bargaining power.

Suggestions:

Students suggest that educational institutions include information about ASEAN in their course syllabi. With regard to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars Action Plan, the students stress that freedom of expression and human rights protection should be taken seriously.

Those representing labor suggest that regional labor-protection laws reflecting universal standards be set and adhered to by member states, ensuring appropriate welfare and equitable wages for workers.

Forum Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

All groups shared suggestions for promoting and developing civil society networks. Farmers, for instance, propose the establishment of civil society network to promote strong organizational development within the country. The youth group suggests that youth assemblies at the ASEAN regional level be established, serving as a platform for networking and exchange of ideas among youth from different countries. Likewise, students propose that civil society network committees be established at local and eventually national levels in order to promote the development of an informed, engaged, and closely connected civil society. Finally, the labor group believes that, in addition to promoting unity among labor unions of ASEAN member countries, the role of labor unions in ASEAN platforms should be expanded. This can be done, they say, by establishing a joint labor meeting during every ASEAN meeting.

8.4) The Northern Platform – Sri Chollathan Temple, Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN– 16 October 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.20 **Opening Session**, by Khun Pannee Wanchai, Vice President of Khee-lheek Tambol Administrative Organization
- 09.20-09.45 Declaring the Meeting’s Objectives, by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk, Director of the People’s Empowerment Foundation
- 09.45-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-12.00 Presentations
- **“ASEAN Charter,”** by Khun Usawadee Chaoprae, Staff, the People’s Empowerment Foundation
 - **“ASEAN: Socio-Cultural Dimensions,”** by Khun Sureerat Nontachoke, The Farmer’s Federations Association for Development, Central Region, Thailand
 - **“ASEAN: Political and Security Dimensions,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Community Radio
 - **“ASEAN: Economic Dimension,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti
- Moderator:** Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit Workers Area Group, and Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-13.15 Presentation: **“Human Rights Mechanisms and the Participation of Civil Society,”** by Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment
- Moderator:** Khun Kulnipa Panton, Rangsit and Nearby Area Trade Union Group
- 13.15-14.00 **Group Discussion Points**
- Issues and problems faced by each group
 - Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars
 - Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
 - How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.00-14.15 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.30 **Presentation of each group discussion**
Summary of the discussion from representatives of the Khee-Lhek Youth Group
- 15.30-14.10 Conclusion Notes, by Khun Winit Chaichit, The Farmer’s Federations Association for Development, Thailand
-

Issues and Suggestions Yielded from Group Discussions

The meeting's diverse participants were categorized into the following 4 groups: the women and youth group, the community leaders group, the ethnic group, and the farmers group. It should be noted that the women's group was particularly strong. The 4 groups discussed problems and issues related to the ASEAN framework, civil society recommendations for ASEAN, and suggestions for bridging civil society networks.

Women and Youth Group

Issues:

Members of this group stated that incomes do not sufficiently address basic expenses, as they have remained stagnant while prices of goods have increased. In addition, part-time or "side-line" jobs are not available as a source of extra or alternative income. Unemployment problems were also said to persist for recent graduates who are frustrated with a barren job market. The group believes that the failure of the state to keep prices under control and create jobs for the people is contributing to widespread poverty.

Family related problems were also discussed, particularly those having to do with difficulties in raising children. For example, mainstream mass media is thought to be a source of negative influence on children who have become disobedient and stubborn to their parents' teachings.

The youth expressed feelings of alienation, as they perceive a lack of opportunities in life as well as limited chances to engage in important social discussions. In addition, the value of education is thought to have depreciated.

Lastly, the group expressed concerns over the increase in crimes such as drug use and sexual harassment or abuse.

Suggestions:

The women and youth group suggest that the state stay informed of the population's problems and standards of living in order to ensure their welfare. They believe that their situation can improve greatly if self-sustaining communities are established through market systems that maximize the potential of people and their products.

This group also recommends the establishment of women and youth assemblies to serve as arenas for discussion and idea exchanges, as well as the arrangement of educational exchanges among the youth of all ASEAN countries. Platforms for the exchange and cultivation of the knowledge and ideas about appropriate mass media consumption are also desired.

Community Leaders Group

Issues:

Community leaders expressed several concerns about farming practices. For instance, the type of mono-crop cultivation that is encouraged by the market requires high investment costs while produce prices are unstable and difficult to predict. Farmers are also thought to be far behind with regard to relevant knowledge about environmental issues, resulting in unsustainable practices that lead to problems for food security and the overall development of the agricultural sector.

Concerns over broad social changes were also discussed, particularly the degradation of traditional ways of life and the failure of community leaders to observe good-governance ethics.

Suggestions:

The community leaders group suggests that ASEAN adjust its economic plan to encourage farmers to utilize the advantages provided by their regions' distinctive crops. In addition, it is recommended that migrant workers be allowed to legally enter the agricultural sector.

With regard to education and governance, the group encourages the improvement of not only the educational level of community leaders (Tambol or provincial administrators) but also of good-governance ethics. They believe that the population should learn to base their voting decisions on the ethical value of candidates.

Lastly, it is suggested that people be allowed to participate in the planning and decision of public funds, the allocations of which should be made transparent.

Farmers Group

Issues:

The farmers group devoted much discussion to their challenges and limitations within a free market system. While production costs are high, farmers have been unable to set prices for their products. Free trade has also created a highly competitive environment in which local farmers are susceptible to market forces beyond their control. Within this environment, farmers from ASEAN member countries find themselves competing against one another for survival. Furthermore, the encouraged use of chemicals in the farming process has created persistent problems of contaminated agricultural products.

Farmers also expressed the need for basic education and concerns over the negative economic effects of Thailand's political turmoil.

Suggestions:

The group suggests that news, information, and technology be disseminated to farmers and the rest of the public. In addition, they recommend that ASEAN establish an agricultural assembly.

The Ethnic and Labor Group

Issues:

Due to their inability to rely on a national identity, those belonging to the ethnic group are regularly discriminated against on religious and cultural grounds. Such discrimination often results in the deprivation of basic rights.

Migrant workers face difficulties in obtaining identity cards and legal work documents, which are issued only under employer control. This leads to heavy obstacles when trying to use transport and healthcare services, as well as obtaining minimum wages. In addition, negative public opinion of migrant workers has created barriers to basic participation in public life. For example, their newborns are refused birth certificates while access to education, welfare, and labor protection is denied. They also face uncertainty with their humanitarian status. In the case of Burmese laborers, identification of nationality is often held against them as well as their families residing in Burma.

Suggestions:

The group would like to see all citizens of ASEAN countries treated equally. Thus everyone, regardless of nationality, should be given an opportunity to obtain an education. Cultural values of every ethnic and national group should also be promoted. In addition, ASEAN identity cards should be issued so that ethnic groups and migrant laborers are not limited by national restrictions. Finally, there should be more support and training for skilled labor.

Forum Suggestions for the Bridging of the Networks

In order to promote development from the grassroots level, civil society networks should be set up. Such networks should be used as platforms for the continual exchange of knowledge and information as well as the persistent execution of work and actions.

Needed assistance in selecting community leaders and in funding projects should be provided, as community leaders most often do not possess sufficient knowledge pertaining to ASEAN matters.

8.5) The Western Platform – Ratchaburi Province Administration Organization

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 30 October 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.20 **Opening Session**, by Khun Pongsak Kijprasert, Vice President of Ratchaburi Province Administration Organization
- 09.20-09.45 **Introducing the People’s Empowerment Foundation**, by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Community Radio
- 09.45-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Coordinator, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-12.00 Presentations
- **“ASEAN Charter,”** by Khun Usawadee Chaoprae, Staff, the People’s Empowerment Foundation
 - **“ASEAN: Socio-Cultural Dimensions,”** by Khun Sureerat Nontachoke, The Farmer’s Federations Association for Development, Central Region, Thailand
 - **“ASEAN: Political and Security Dimensions,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Community Radio
 - **“ASEAN: Economic Dimension,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti
- Moderator:** Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-13.15 Presentation: **“Human Rights Mechanisms and the Participation of Civil Society,”** by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk and Khun Pornpipat Wad-Aksorn, Bho-Nork Community Radio
- Moderator:** Khun Kriangkrai Cheechuang, Karen Network for Culture and Environment
- 13.15-14.00 **Group Discussion Agenda**
- Issues and problems faced by each group
 - Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars
 - Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
 - How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.00-14.15 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.50 **Presentation of group discussions**
- 15.50-16.10 **Concluding Session**, by Khun Pongsak Kijprasert, Vice President of Ratchaburi Province Administration Organization
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Issues and Suggestions Yielded from Group Discussions

The meeting's diverse participants were categorized into the following 3 groups: the agricultural and environmental group; the women, children and youth group; and the labor and community radio group. Below are the issues and suggestions that were discussed.

Agricultural and Environmental Group

Issues:

The agricultural and environmental group sees liberal capitalism as the dominant ideology behind the current economic system. This system, which aims to accumulation capital to bring about maximum benefits, has led to the exploitation of farmers and laborers for the purpose of maximizing profits. In this context, farmers have lost their bargaining power and many have fallen victim to high production costs and eventual dependence on the country's business elite for expensive loans. The group has also expressed concerns over the negative impact that development projects have had on the environment and natural resources, including the wasteful consumption of energy, global warming, and risks of food and power shortages.

Suggestions:

The agricultural and environmental group contends that the capitalist practice of relying on Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) or end products as measures of a country's developmental progress must be reconsidered. Instead, it is suggested that governments consider farmers' problems in their agendas and base developmental policies on principles that value the happiness and well being of people in addition to material progress. ASEAN should act to implement these alternative measures so that trade and development can thrive concomitantly with the welfare of the people. States, however, may need to help cultivate knowledge and awareness within civil society in order to encourage changes from the grassroots level up. By doing so, farmers as a group can be strengthened to the point of self-sustainability.

Women, Children, and Youth Group

Issues:

The women, children, and youth group believe that the intensity and seriousness of current local problems, such as youth prostitution and drug use, stem from the growing cults of materialism and consumerism that are gaining tremendous influence over society. The group identified families, educational systems, and the mass media as playing key roles in intensifying these consumerist trends. In addition, issues of women's rights abuses were discussed.

Suggestions:

The group suggests that laws protecting women's rights be passed and enforced. However, as they realize that the protection of such rights cannot be achieved solely through the passing of laws, they propose that proper knowledge of and attitudes towards women's rights are fostered. Likewise, the cultivation of democratic ideals may help ameliorate labor problems. In addition, the group believes

that the fight against the transnational problem of human trafficking and trade should also be reinforced.

Community Radio and Labor Group

Issues:

The community radio group recognizes that the media controls key mediums for spreading information and carrying out public relations. As such, the mass media has social and cultural dimensions directly related to people's ways of life. The group, however, contends that the mainstream media acts primarily as a mouthpiece for the national business sector and politicians while depriving the people of varied information presented in an unbiased manner. While members of civil society have become aware of such problems, the government has yet to reconsider its attitudes in controlling and interfering with the media. For example, the government's selective allocation of frequency waves and prosecution of those freely utilizing radio waves within the communities is thought to be unfair.

The problems faced by the labor group are thought to result from political doctrine and nationalism, including those based in neighboring countries (i.e. the case of human rights abuse in Burma). This group identifies the exploitation of migrant worker as an important problem to focus on.

Suggestions:

Those representing community radio contend that frequency airwaves are resources for humankind, and hence the rights to their use must be allocated in a just manner. Furthermore, it is suggested that ASEAN play an important role in informing and educating people who wish to gain broad and multi-dimensional knowledge. This can be done, for example, by allocating budgets to establish an educational trust fund, initiating advocacy campaigns for the rights of the underprivileged, and creating a standard of mass media freedom. In addition, it is also proposed that ASEAN promote the connections of mass media networks among member countries.

The labor group proposes that government and ASEAN attitudes over migrant labor issues be reconsidered. The migrant workers' existence and rights must be acknowledged because of the immense number of such workers and the important part they play in Thailand's economy. In addition, the number of programs that promote democracy among the people should be increased, especially in troubled places such as Cambodia and Burma.

Additional Forum Suggestions

During the discussion, it was also mentioned that regional or ASEAN courts be established and authorized to enforce jurisdiction and punish those who transgress laws. Such courts are needed because the justice systems of some countries, such as that of Cambodia, are often unreliable. ASEAN courts can also serve to protect people who work across national borders.

8.6) The Upper Southern Platform – Siam Thani Hotel, Suratthani Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 8 November 2008

08.30-09.00	Registration
09.00-09.15	Opening Session , by Khun Suvit Taecharoen, Director of The Farmer's Federations Association for Development, Southern Region, Thailand
09.15-09.30	Program Objectives , by Khun Daycho Tekortang, Committee, the Farmer's Federations Association for Development, Southern Region, Thailand
09.30-09.45	Introducing the People's Empowerment Foundation , by Khun Chalida Tajaroen, Director, the People's Empowerment Foundation
09.45-10.30	Presentation: "ASEAN Overview," by Khun Sitthisak Sassanasopa,
10.30-10.45	Coffee Break
	Discussion Platform: "ASEAN Charter and ASEAN's Three Community Blueprints," the Impact on the Population's Ways of Life , by Khun Kriangsak Teerakowitkajorn, Khun Watchara Yindeearp, and Khun Sitthisak Sassanasopa Moderator: Khun Kulnipa Panton
12.30-13.30	Lunch
13.30-14.00	Presentations: "Human Rights Mechanisms," by Khun Kulnipa Panton, and "ASEAN Civil Society," by Khun Watchara Yindeearp
14.00-15.00	Group Discussion on the Following Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Civil society suggestions for ASEAN- How to bridge civil society networks
15.00-15.15	Coffee Break
15.15-16.00	Presentation of group discussions, Discussion about a parallel platform
16.00-16.30	Concluding Notes, by Khun Daycho Tekortang

Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Group Discussions

During the meeting, participants were divided into 2 groups, which in turn analyzed and discussed a particular topic. The first group discussed recommendations for the bridging of civil society networks and their role in future ASEAN affairs. The second group discussed recommendations for ASEAN with regard to the Charter and ASEAN's Three Main Pillars Operational Plan.

Group 1 Suggestions

The first group suggests that the role of civil society networks be expanded in order to foster participation in ASEAN's future works. This can be done by creating organizations and platforms to facilitate the continual exchange of ideas and cooperation among different networks. In addition, lecturers and educational teams who are well informed about ASEAN matters should be sent to several regions to disseminate information to communities and labor groups. It is advised that such information should carefully and comprehensively educate all professional groups on their relation

to ASEAN and its policies, particularly those working at fisheries and farming rubber and palm trees in the Southern region.

Group 2 Suggestions

The second group offered recommendations for the ASEAN Charter and Three Main Pillars Action Plan, focusing on human security in terms of economic, social and cultural dimensions. They suggest that, to facilitate trade, the operational plan for ASEAN's economic community should include a clause establishing the use of a single currency within the community. In addition, the establishment of a central market for farmers is desired so that they will be able to engage in direct exchanges of products without reliance on middlemen.

Recommendations were also made regarding a welfare system for farmers. It is proposed that states draw from ASEAN-supported budgets to allocate 50 Rai (approximately 80,000 square meters) of land for each family to work and reside. Furthermore, states should guarantee certain prices for agricultural products, provide insurance against natural disasters, facilitate the building of central rice mills, and subsidize agricultural tools and appliances to reduce unreasonably high production costs.

In addition, the group proposes that ASEAN's Socio-cultural Action Plan provide forms of social welfare to the elderly, sick, and the youth. For example, a monthly pension of 1,500 baht to all farmers over the age of 60 until their death. The group also proposes that free universal health care (or at least the equivalent to the existing pay-back system available to civil servants) and education up to the university level be provided.

Finally, it is recommended that problems related to the environment, particularly air pollution, be addressed in a serious action-oriented manner.

8.7) The Lower Southern Region’s Platform – Baan Kuan School, Satool Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 30 October 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.20 **Opening Session**, by Khun Namchai Krissanasakul, Director of Satul Community College
- 09.20-09.45 **Program Objectives**, by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk, Director of the People’s Empowerment Foundation, and Khun Rahman Lheesen, Community Radio 94 PFM
- 09.45-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by Khun Kavee Jongkitthavorn, Managerial Editor of the Nation Newspaper, and Questions-and-Answers session
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-11.45 Discussion Platforms: **“The Issues of the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Community’s Blueprints”**
Presentations:
- **“ASEAN Charter and ASEAN’s Three Main Community Blueprints,”** by Khun Kriangsak Teerakowitkajorn, Programm Manager, The People’s Empowerment Foundation
- **“Criticisms of ASEAN Political-Security and Socio-Cultural issues,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Community Radio
- **“Criticisms of ASEAN Economic Issues,”** by Khun Sittisak Sassanasopa
- 11.45- 12.00 Discussion exchange
- The situation of and problems faced by each group
- Connection of problems to the ASEAN
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-13.30 Presentation: **“Human Rights Mechanisms and ASEAN’s Civil Society,”** by Khun Chalida Tajaroensuk and Khun Watchara Yindeelarp
- 13.30-14.00 **Group Discussions on the Following Points:**
- Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
- How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.00-14.15 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.30 **Presentation of each group discussion**
- 15.30 Conclusion Notes, by Khun Rahman Lheesen
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Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Group Discussions

The Satul platform is notable for the fact that there were a considerably large number of engaged university students attending the meeting. Thus, in the interest of clarity and effectiveness in obtaining their opinions and suggestions, the students were gathered into a single discussion group. The rest of the attendees were put into a second discussion group. Both groups analyzed and discussed recommendations for the ASEAN community regarding the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN’s Three Main Pillars Operational Plan, and ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. Suggestions were also made among all participants for bridging civil society networks.

Student Group Suggestions

The student group suggests that ASEAN develop a standard system of mutual cooperation among educational, health care, social welfare, and justice mechanisms.

The group also recommends that more attention be paid to the positive development of ASEAN civil society and ASEAN mass media. It is suggested that ASEAN provide a venue for gatherings of ASEAN civil society members, who will then be invested with bargaining power to represent the civil society on the same level as states. In addition, either the ASEAN Charter or the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Action Plan should stipulate the allocation of sufficient budgets, provided by member governments, for the operation of civil society activities.

In regard to ASEAN's media, it is proposed that the dissemination of regional news and information be ensured to help people collectively monitor the activities of their governments. As the group attributes current regional conflicts to ever-present nationalistic sentiments and policies, they believe that ASEAN's media can play a positive role in fostering common understanding among civil societies of all member nations. Such understanding is crucial for the reduction of prejudice and avoidance of further conflict. Also related to the goal of building common understanding, the group suggests that a "Culture Map," in which frontiers are drawn to correspond to transnational cultures, be used as a tool for encouraging peaceful coexistence.

Lastly, with regard to the economic policies of ASEAN, the student group suggests that prices of agricultural and food products be determined by a single standard system that uses a common regional currency. By doing so, ASEAN can facilitate trade within the region.

Mixed Discussion Group Suggestions

Recognizing that the civil society was not given a fair chance to participate in the drafting of the ASEAN Charter, the second group calls for a reconsideration of many points within the Charter as well as the establishment of proper mechanisms ensuring people's involvement in decision-making processes.

With regard to the ASEAN Economic Community Action Plan, the group recommends that much importance be put on issues effecting farmers and the agricultural sector. They propose that ASEAN consider annulling debts that farmers incurred during participation in government-led projects, decreasing tariffs on imported agricultural products, and guaranteeing certain prices of quality controlled agricultural products in the region. In addition, increased trade among ASEAN's member countries should be promoted and facilitated through the establishment of a common regional currency.

Additional recommendations include the issuance, by ASEAN, of a universal business permit to be used throughout the region, and government control and eventual decrease of chemical imports that have had adverse effects on the environment.

Additional Forum Suggestions

All attendees of the Lower Southern forum consider human rights abuse as a prominent local problem that is directly connected to the economic, political, and security dimensions of ASEAN. The lack of knowledge and understanding about Islamic religion and culture on the part of civil servants has led to attitudes of mistrust and disrespect toward local inhabitants. Such a situation has created and exacerbated problems of insecurity and terrorism, which in turn worsen the already existing poverty problems. Therefore, it is necessary for ASEAN to become involved in helping the state to reduce religious and cultural intolerance and promote human rights norm among civil servants. ASEAN should also assist in job creation in order to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Thai government provide loans to support local economic activities that utilize the skills and natural resources endemic to specific areas.

It is also suggested that the Thai government promote universal education for local residents, raise awareness about the seriousness of food security issues, and implement policies that will guarantee sufficient amounts of food for the local population.

In regard to ASEAN's Political and Security Action Plan, the meeting's participants propose that ASEAN include Malay as an official language, in addition to English, because it is used by a large number of ASEAN people. It is also suggested ASEAN passports or identity cards be introduced to enable the free movement of people and labor.

Forum Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

Forum participants suggest that ASEAN provide open spaces during each ASEAN forum for civil society participation and network building. Platforms for cooperation among media groups, communities, and civil society organizations should also be created so that these groups can collaborate on various issues such as those relating to women and children.

Students, in particular, propose that representatives of ASEAN civil society be allowed participation in ASEAN's Coordinating Council and/or ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Council. It is also suggested that a permanent office for civil society representatives be set up as part of the ASEAN secretariat in order to coordinate civil society operational plans. Furthermore, an ASEAN assembly for social and economic development, including an ASEAN labor committee, should also be established to promote cooperation on economic and labor rights issues for each country.

8.8) Bangkok and its Periphery's Regional Platform – Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) CODI, Bangkok

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 30 October 2008

08.30-09.00	Registration
09.00-09.45	Stating the Meeting's Objectives and Opening Session , by Khun Chalida Tajaroenusuk, Director of the People's Empowerment Foundation
09.45-10.30	Presentation and Q & A session: "ASEAN Overview," by the Former Ambassador H.E. Kasit Piromya,
10.30-10.45	Coffee Break
10.45-11.45	Discussion Platform: "The Issues of the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Community Blueprints" and Presentation: "The ASEAN Charter and ASEAN's Three Main Pillars," by Khun Kriangsak Teerakowitkajorn, Program Manager, The People's Empowerment Foundation "Criticisms of Political and Security Action Plan," by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Community Radio "Criticisms of Economic, Social and Cultural Action Plans," by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti
10.45-12.00	Exchange of Discussions of the Problems Faced by the Groups of Meeting's Attendees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The situation of and problems faced by each group- Connection of problems to the ASEAN Charter and the Three Main Pillars
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-13.30	Presentations: "Human Rights Mechanisms," by Khun Chalida Tajaroenusuk and "ASEAN Civil Society," by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp
13.30-14.00	Group Discussion on the Following Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Civil society suggestions for ASEAN- How to bridge civil society networks
14.00-14.15	Coffee Break
14.15-15.30	Presenting Group Discussions' Agreed Minutes
15.30	Conclusion Notes

Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Group Discussions

As a large number of labor representatives were present at the Bangkok forum, a single discussion group was formed to obtain clear recommendations reflecting the concerns of labor – an important and large civil society group in Bangkok and its periphery. Another discussion group consisting of those whose works relate to mass media and the youth, the disabled, and farmers was formed. As in the previous 2 platforms, both groups analyzed and provided recommendations for the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN's Three Main Pillars' Action Plan, and the bridging of civil society networks.

Labor Group

The labor group suggests that the Blueprints and Action Plans for ASEAN's Political-Security Community prioritize democratic norm that allow for the active engagement of the people. Thus, ASEAN must respond unambiguously to countries that are ruled by dictatorship.

In regard to the ASEAN Economic Community, the labor group proposes an increase in cooperation among the member countries to achieve a common standard for worker wages, workplace security, and the protection of the basic rights and freedoms.

Lastly, in regard to the ASEAN Social-Cultural Community, it is suggested that ASEAN include principles for promoting common understanding and respect among civil society of each member country. In order to achieve this, it is necessary for ASEAN to allocate budgets for the creation of cultural education and civil society exchange platforms.

Mass Media and the Youth, Disabled, and Farmers Group

Recognizing that the media has great deal of influence on society, those working in the field suggest that ASEAN and/or the government help in efforts to develop media platforms that contribute to positive societal development without the promotion of consumerism. They recommend that the social and cultural role of the media be promoted through financial support for those works that encourage moral and intellectual development. In addition, cultural exchanges among the mass media of all ASEAN member countries should be facilitated. Such cooperation must be supported for the creation of an ASEAN mass media.

Representatives of the disabled contend that their problems have been largely neglected, resulting in a public that is misinformed on several key issues of concern to disabled people. Such neglect is also manifested in frequent denial and non-protection of rights. For example, disabled people have limited access to basic transportation, education, and employment. As such, it is suggested that the government support policies for education and employment accessibility. As both the ASEAN Charter and Socio-Cultural Community Action Plan lack any mention of the rights of the disabled, this group proposes that clauses indicating the protection of such rights be clearly stated in various ASEAN documents. In addition, they would like ASEAN to allow for increased participation by disabled people in various organizations and platforms. Finally, it is desired that the terms "disabled" be used when discussing issues pertaining to such people.

The farmers group proposes that free trade policies be reconsidered because they have caused problems for the farmers and the agricultural sector. For example, competition with imported products has hampered farmers' efforts to make a living off of their crops. In addition to redirecting its focus towards the development and promotion of domestic products, the government should inform its people about the workings of and how to operate within the market system. Most importantly, though, protection of locally produced products and guarantees of minimum product prices should be established. Parallel to these efforts should be the creation of research and learning centers in order to enable farmers to raise the quality of their agricultural products.

All members of the disabled, farmers, mass media and youth group regard locally developed cultures and knowledge systems as highly valuable assets in Thailand. Thus, ASEAN should promote development based on the ideas and specialties of the country's diverse local cultures.

Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

The forum participants suggest that networks be set up for the exchange of knowledge and information as well as the coordination of civil society activities. This can be done, for example, by establishing a special ASEAN civil society network center to serve as a venue for discussion and as a study center for monitoring policies and agreements that ASEAN governments have signed. This center can also be used as a medium to assert civil society demands regarding ASEAN issues, for example its human rights mechanism.

8.9) The Eastern Platform – Ratchanakarin Rajabhat University, Chachoengsao Province

Agenda for the Discussion Forum on ASEAN – 29 November 2008

- 08.30-09.00 Registration
- 09.00-09.15 **Opening Session**, by Master Prachotithammabirom, Abbot of Silathammaram Temple, Klang District, Rayong Province
- 09.15-09.30 **Stating the Meeting’s Objectives**, by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Representative of the Director of the People’s Empowerment Foundation
- 09.30-10.30 Presentation: **“ASEAN Overview,”** by Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti, Representative, Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Large Chemical-Free Agricultural Tracks, Umpang Region
- 10.30-10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45-11.45 Presentation: **“The ASEAN Charter and ASEAN’s Three Main Pillars,”** by Khun Kriangsak Teerajowitkajorn, Programm Manager, the People’s Empowerment Foundation
- 11.45-12.45 Lunch
- 12.45-13.15 Platform: **“Criticisms of ASEAN’s Three Main Pillars Action Plan,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp, Representative of Community Radio, Khun Sittisak Sassanasopa, Volunteer of the People’s Empowerment Foundation, and Khun Chaiwat Trakarnratsanti
Moderator: Khun Kriangsak Teeragowitkajorn
- 13.15-13.45 Opening Platform for Questions and Answers on the topic: **“Problems and their Connection to the ASEAN Charter and Three Main Pillars”**
- 13.45-14.45 Group Discussion on the Following Points:
- Civil society suggestions for ASEAN
- How to bridge civil society networks
- 14.45-15.00 Coffee Break
- 14.15-15.30 Presenting Group Discussions’ Agreed Minutes
- 15.30-16.00 Presentation: **“Human Rights Mechanisms and ASEAN Civil Society,”** by Khun Watchara Yindeelarp
- 16.00-16.15 Conclusion Notes, by Master Prachotithammabirom
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Issues and Suggestions Yielded from the Group Discussion

Participants of the Eastern platform (single group) devoted much discussion to developmental strategies based on the self-sufficiency economy philosophy. The group proposes that economic development plans seriously consider social and cultural concerns, such as physical and mental welfare, and base economic systems on local wisdoms. For example, Thailand should concentrate on promoting Thai herbs and organic food products.

The group also suggests that ASEAN and government economic and environmental policies take into account factors such as social values, customs and culture, religion, and history. They believe that Thailand should draw from its vast knowledge systems and agricultural resources to produce food using environmentally friendly technologies, increase agricultural lands, and establish itself as a

world leader in food production as well as a source for knowledge and wisdom. To help achieve these goals, ASEAN should establish a regional development institute that allows for people participation and prioritizes welfare over profit. Such an institute can be used to analyze and evaluate policies and their effects on the public. The creation of an ASEAN media and ASEAN museum is also recommended.

Furthermore, it is recommended that ASEAN and the Thai government help to build knowledge hubs in communities so that people can plan and execute projects that may include monitoring of governmental policies and systems, documenting persistent problems and pressing issues, and analysis of news and information provided by the government (for example, production data).

Additional suggestions include the provision of job training provided by human resource development centers and labor union cooperation from all ASEAN member countries to standardize wages.

Lastly, some participants refuse to accept the validity of the existing ASEAN Charter because people were not allowed to participate in its formation process. It is believed that the Charter, along with the ASEAN Community's Three Main Blueprints, stipulates development policies that are deemed incompatible with the needs and demands of the community. Thus, it is proposed that the Charter be discarded and a new people's charter be created.

Suggestions for Bridging Civil Society Networks

The forum participants propose that the ASEAN Foundation collaborate with a five-party body consisting of states, academics, the people, the private sector, and the media to establish a center for the purpose of civil society cooperation at the regional level. Such a center should conduct regional research and act as a base for publicizing knowledge and information.