

## **Thailand's approach towards youth crime prevention strategy at national level**

### **Based on**

#### **A study on National Strategies on Youth Crime Prevention**

(A collaboration between TIJ, Thammasart University and Australia Institute of Criminology)

### **Introduction**

- Firstly, I would like to draw attention on some facts and number. In Southeast Asian region, the youth population aged between 15-24 years accounts for approximately 22 percent of the workforce and 59 percent of the unemployment in the region. The number of children in conflict with the justice system in this region remains comparatively low but steadily increasing at the rate of 70,000 juveniles a year.
- In Thailand context, according to the official statistics, as of 2014, the total number of children who are in conflict with the law was slightly over 36,500. This number means that there are 543 children who are in conflict with the law in Thailand (in 2014) for every 100,000 children aged between 10- 18 years.
- A large proportion of children who are in conflict with the law (45% or 16,500 persons) were involved in drug-related offence. Other major types of offences are property crime (about 20%), and to a lesser extent, crime against the life and body (10%)
- It was underscored that unequal access to basic services, family breakdown, availability of drugs and alcohol and the absence of the rule of law are contributing factors to youth violence and the involvement of youth gangs and terrorist organizations. Given these facts, there is a need to understand the nature and root causes of youth crime in order to develop a set of prevention strategies.
- Hence, TIJ has been working with local stakeholders to develop a national youth crime prevention strategy for Thailand in collaboration with Australia Institute of Criminology and Thammasart University. While this study is still underway (the final product is expected in July 2018) , some preliminary findings are now available and today I'd like to share some of these in this PNI Workshop.

### **Objectives**

This research project on developing of a national strategy youth crime prevention for Thailand has been thus conducted with these following objectives:

- To study existing models of youth crime prevention strategies developed by other countries such as those in Latin America region and member countries in Southeast Asia.
- To analyze policy and legal frameworks related to juvenile justice and crime prevention in Thailand and beyond. The later includes international legal framework such as Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant UN Standards and Norms. We also aim to take stock on emerging discussions under the auspices of ASEAN. (such as discussion emerged in regional forums like ACCPCJ)
- To conduct gap analysis and assessment on capacity of actors toward prevention of crime targeting youth population.
- To develop strategies to prevent youth crime at national level

## Research methods

The research relies on involvement from stakeholders working with children to map the problem and design on possible solutions. From the last quarter of 2016, a series of consultations have been conducted with more than 30 stakeholders including government agencies, international organizations and civil society. Field visits and focus groups have also been organized in five provinces including Bangkok and for other big provinces across the country (เชียงใหม่, เชียงราย, อุตรดิตถ์, สงขลา)

Discussion with stakeholders was based on three key questions:

1. What are main type of crime involving children and what are their causes?;
2. Do we have adequate legal and policy infrastructure to address and to prevent crimes conducted by youth? And what are our shortfalls?;
3. What will be the trends in 5 years and, taking into account these trends, what should be our strategies toward the youth crime prevention in the future.

## Key findings

- Statistics show that three main types of crime include: drug, life/body crime, and property crimes. Youth crime is especially prevalent and severe in urban areas with the more advanced organization of crime and a well-established crime network.
- key factors enabling youth crime can be grouped as followed:

*Drug related crimes:* In Thailand context, youth could be prone to drug problems due to the following factors:

- easy access to drug and widespread of drug in some communities.
- hanging out with friends who use drug
- Poverty leading to the lack of access to education

*Life/body crimes:*

- history of domestic violence
- peer pressure, desire to be accepted from the society
- media influence (violence content) include social medias

*Property crimes*

- consuming culture/ materialism
- economic disadvantages

In terms of legal infrastructure, there are a number legislations providing safeguard and protection of the right of the child. Among other protected rights, Thai Constitution underlines the rights to education for all children in the way that the State must guarantee access to education with free of charge or acceptable cost.

On the front of juvenile justice system, there is a set of legislations providing protection for the rights of children and youth. These can include, for example, the Juvenile and Family Court Procedure Act of 2010, the Child Protection Act of 2003, Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act of 2007, and specific provisions under the Civil and Criminal Codes, as well as the Criminal Procedure Code.

However it is found that youth crime prevention could be treated as an emerging new concept and might not be fully understood in the same way by all actors. The study has also found that there is a lack of mechanism for long term monitoring to prevent youth with criminal backgrounds to be involved in criminal activities again.

## Recommendations in the design of national youth crime strategies

A set of six strategies has been recommended by the research team

- **Awareness raising on involvement of youth in criminal activities and the need to protect these youth from criminal involvement:** The society should be aware of the situation where youths are involved in criminal activities, and it is necessary for Thailand to develop a national strategy for youth crime prevention as an integral part of and in line with our national strategic plan.
- **Review of national law to be in accordance of relevant international law and standards and norms related to youth crime prevention.** It is important to analyze the policy objectives and the law related to youth crime prevention including the obligations under the international law, political declaration, as well as the UN standards and norms. It is especially important to take into account resources required to ensure the development and successful implementation of these strategies in Thai society's context.
- **partnership building among main stakeholder in government sector and civil society sector related to youth crime prevention.** It is to expand the cooperation among the key actors in the government sector, the private sector, the general public both at the family and community levels.
- **promoting participation by community members and youth in developing mechanisms for crime prevention in the community.** Such participation will help ensure that these mechanisms will be developed in such a way that is appropriate for the cultural context and the age of the target group
- **research and capacity building activities in targeted youth crime prevention.** This is to analyze the gap in research and capacity-building activities.
- **sharing of best practices,** including through comparative study from different regions, and sharing such knowledge will be helpful towards fostering a culture of lawfulness.