



Education of the Disadvantaged

A Lecture by
H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO Bangkok

Education of the Disadvantaged

A Lecture by
Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

at Srinakarinwirot University (Prasarnmit)
Bangkok, Thailand

on the
15th Annual Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Day
Monday, November 12, 2001

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Translated from Thai "Gan sukka khong phu doi ogat"

1. EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED. 2. DISADVANTAGED GROUPS. 3. DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN. 4. ACCESS TO EDUCATION. 5. RIGHT TO EDUCATION. I. Title.

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Foreword



Every year Srinakharinwirot University celebrates Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Day to express its gratitude to Her Royal Highness and to commemorate Her Royal Highness's graduation in 1986 with a doctoral degree in Development Education from Srinakharinwirot University.

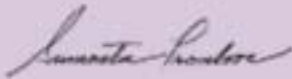
On the occasion of the 15th annual Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Day, the university organized a celebration on November 12, 2001, at its demonstration secondary school. Her Royal Highness kindly presided over the opening ceremony of the school's new Vidayavirodh Building and gave a 100-minute long lecture on *Education of the Disadvantaged*. It was one of the most gracious moments in the history of Srinakharinwirot University.

This book contains edited words of Her Royal Highness from a recorded tape.

The lecture is a clear reflection of a genius in education. She analyzed the Pali and Sanskrit root of the Thai word for education, " **โอบุสโอบุ** ", and gave many examples of student-centered teaching methods of Lord Buddha whose

disciples from different backgrounds went on to reach enlightenment. She then elaborated on the 15 categories of the disadvantaged. She defined and discussed education problems in each group. Her Royal Highness's insights on the theory and practice of education are evident in this lecture.

We are overwhelmed by Her Royal Highness's kindness in extending Her heart to many disadvantaged people in Thailand and other nations. Her Royal Highness's works and ideas are truly a source of knowledge and know-how for us to study and to follow in order to help the disadvantaged gain an equal opportunity in education.



Sumonta Promboon
President, Srinakharinwirot University
1 June 2002

UNESCO Foreword



It is a great honour for UNESCO to publish this book to commemorate Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's 4th cycle birthday. This book contains a lecture given by Her Royal Highness on the 15th Annual Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Day at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand.

It is recognized that education is a fundamental human right. Many efforts were made to strengthen education between the 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Thailand and the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum held in Senegal. Many goals were set – and have yet to be achieved. Today, there are still almost 900 million illiterate adults in the world. They comprise 1/5 of the world's adult population – and 2/3 of them are women. Of these, about 70% are in the Asia and Pacific region. There is also a large number of illiterate youth and children in the region, part of the estimated 113 million children of primary school age in the world who are still not in school. And even for those who do gain access to school, many of them will finish their education barely literate. These children are among the poor, members of ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities and affected by HIV/AIDS, and those who live in rural areas – and most of them are also girls. Such children, as adults, will never be able to master the impact which developments in information and communication technologies and the growing global economy will have on their communities and on their lives.

Thus, all children must have access to education of good quality. The Dakar Framework for Action has both a target and a strategy which define educational quality broadly, as including not only the quality of teaching and learning – teachers,

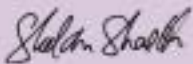


curriculum, materials, facilities, and techniques – but also the need for healthy, well-nourished, and motivated students; healthy, safe, and protective learning environments; participatory school governance and management; and respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures.

Dakar also insists that we must ensure that the learning needs of all children, young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes which have to be up-to-date, carefully targeted and useful for learners in tackling their varied and most pressing concerns; for example, HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues, conflict resolution, and income generation. Designing programmes which lead to learning – and using – these skills will be a major challenge of all Education for All partners around the world.

Her Royal Highness has categorized various disadvantaged groups and given innovative and practical suggestions on suitable teaching techniques, as well as on good educational management and facilities, which can help ensure that these groups are both in school and are learning. One other group that could be added to the list is children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS, an ever larger group in Southeast Asia. Such children, who drop out of school for economic, social, and cultural reasons – or are pushed out by stigma and discrimination – must also be ensured their rightful place as students and learners.

I hope this book will be useful for educational policy makers and planners, academics and educationists, teachers and other practitioners, and all those who are involved in education activities and development.



Sheldon Shaeffer
Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Education of the Disadvantaged

By H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn¹



Madam President has invited me to express some opinions and to discuss education today. At first, she had suggested the topic *Education of Disadvantaged Children* but I have adjusted the topic to include disadvantaged people of all ages. This is a challenging topic, but it is very broad.

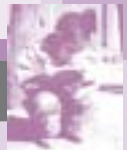
Groups of the Disadvantaged

After the topic was established, I made a list in my notebook of 15 disadvantaged groups, as follows:

1. People in disadvantaged, remote areas, poorly served by educational services;
2. People who cannot afford to study;
3. People of limited intelligence;
4. Sick or undernourished people who do not have strength to study and work;
5. People with physical or mental disabilities;



¹ A lecture delivered at the 15th Annual Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Day, in Srinakharinwirot University (Prasarnmit), 12 November 2001.



6. Orphan children;
7. Children of transient people, e.g., construction workers, migrant laborers in agriculture, people living in houseboats and fishermen;
8. Street children;
9. Child laborers, child soldiers and child sex-workers;
10. People who lacked the opportunity to study during childhood. Once beyond school age, the ability to learn may be reduced;
11. Prison inmates;
12. Refugees, illegal immigrants and people with no nationality;
13. People who do not understand the language of instruction;
14. People whose social context does not promote education, for instance, some societies believe that women do not need any study, or that grown-up children should work rather than study; and
15. People who have advanced ideas and great intelligence. Teachers, not knowing how to teach such children, get upset and do not want to teach them.

These groups are usually excluded from the mainstream of education in a conventional sense. Therefore, education for them requires special techniques and additional funding. Those responsible for education may know how to handle them, but may have insufficient funding to do so.

Defining Education

Before I elaborate on the 15 groups of the disadvantaged, I would like to talk about the word “การศึกษา” (*education*) first. Here is the simple definition of *education* which I derived:

Education is a process of making a person gain knowledge and qualities enabling that person to survive and be useful to self, family and society.

I would like to analyze the word “ศึกษา” (*suksa*) according to the Pali and Sanskrit languages. This word is derived from Sanskrit “ศึกษา” (*sik sa*), or “ศึกษา” (*sik kha*) in Pali. Pali and Sanskrit, like Greek and Latin in the



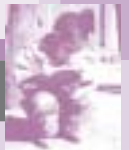
Indo-European group, are languages that add suffixes to words. The word comes from the root "śak," meaning "to be capable", as in "ศักยภาพ" (sakayabhab), or "potential" in English. Adding the suffix "s" to the root, the word becomes "sik sa" (ศึกษา) in Sanskrit or "suksa" (ศึกษา) in Thai. The "s" is a "desiderative" which makes a derivative form available in Sanskrit grammar.

"Suksa" (ศึกษา) means "to want to be capable". One wants to be educated because one wants to be a more capable and competent person. In Pali, those in the process of studying are called "เสกขะ" (sekkha) or "เสขะ" (sekha), from the root word ศึกษา (sik kha). An arahant, an enlightened one who has attained Nirvana, is called "อเสกขะ" (asekkha) or "อเสขะ" (asekha), meaning one who has finished studying and needs no further instruction.

Education begins first in the family. It builds personality and improves the quality of life. It mainly includes learning the skills of daily life and necessary development such as speaking, eating, walking, dressing; household work such as cleaning, sewing, mending or fixing things; and learning about parents' work. For example, farmers, fishermen, and craftsmen bring their children along while working. The children of medical doctors, soldiers and businesspeople also observe and imitate what their parents do.

Nowadays children may view their parents' jobs as boring and therefore want to pursue other careers. This may happen when parents own big companies but their children do not want to work in those companies. If the parents expect their children to inherit their business, it may be painful for the children. This is the situation today, whereas in the past, children tended to follow their parents' paths. Perhaps they should make their own choice. A further problem in today's society is the wrongful use of child labor in the household.

The family is also a source of moral education and social values. Children develop habits within the family. I was born in a family where my parents enjoyed reading and learning, so I too developed the habit of reading and learning.



As a society develops, those who would like to develop themselves must be educated beyond knowing how to grow rice or catch fish. Some families may be able to educate their own children, but most have to seek education from others. In the past, this education was most often provided by monks. I observe that Thai people have an attitude of leaving their homes to seek knowledge, as seen in Thai performances such as *ลิเก* (a Thai traditional folk play) and *ละครลิง* (monkey play). The leading characters in these stories grow up and seek teachers who are mostly old monks or hermits. On their return from their studies, the characters often face adventures. This may also demonstrate the value of searching for knowledge, especially knowledge that fulfills one's needs. There may also be value in studying far away from home so that one can be independent and take care of oneself, especially during the search for the right teacher. This is the concept of His Majesty the King's *Phra Dabot* (พระดาบส) School, which is already well known and documented.

Different Teaching and Learning Styles

In my observation of teaching, people in the past understood the various kinds of intelligences and environments among different people. Good teachers knew what their students were like and taught them accordingly. In Buddhism there are many stories illustrating this. Allow me to elaborate on some examples.

In the commentary of Dhammapada, there was a monk named *Phra Culapanthaka* (พระอุพบั่นถก) who had limited intelligence and was a slow learner. His elder brother, who had been ordained as a monk at the same time, had already reached the arahant stage. He tried to teach his younger brother to memorize just one poem, but was unsuccessful regardless of how hard he tried. Finally, he gave up and told his brother to leave the monkhood to be a layman. Later, Phra Culapanthaka had a chance to meet Lord Buddha. The Lord instructed this person, who could not remember even one poem in 4 months, to memorize only 4 words. While citing the words "*rajoharanam rajoharanam*" (โรหโรหณโรหโรหณ) (meaning "*a dust cloth*") repeatedly, he was instructed to wipe



his hands on a piece of white cloth over and over. Dirt accumulated on the cloth as he wiped. He then realized the truth of life. Life was like a white cloth. It had been white until defilement was attached to it. Through this kind of reflective thinking, he reached enlightenment.

Of 40 stated methods of Buddhist practice, a student can choose the method that is appropriate to his nature. This demonstrates how teachers should teach with respect to the background of their students. There are many other interesting stories in Buddhism for educators to study.

Some people may have good background and good knowledge, but they may be disadvantaged in other aspects. There is the story of one monk who suffered from a skin disease. When Lord Buddha went to visit him, the Lord cured the lesions and taught him about the foulness of the body. The monk reflected and reached enlightenment before he entered *Nirvana*.

In the case of *Patacara* (นางปลุกจारा) or *Patacara Theri* (ปลุกจาราเถรี), she also attained the stage of arahant. Before that, she had lost her parents and children and had been through several natural disasters until she went insane. She met Lord Buddha and was instructed to find some cabbage seeds from a family in which no member had ever died. She looked and looked, but never found one. She decided by herself that death and loss were inevitable. Instead of pining, she sought ways to solve her problems. This insight guided her towards enlightenment.

Angulimala (องคุลิมาล) is another story of the disadvantaged. He had met a bad teacher who was jealous of this intelligent student. The teacher tricked the student in order to rid himself of future competition. He instructed his student to kill people, hoping that some day the student would fail and get killed or executed. Lord Buddha waited for Angulimala to attempt to kill Him. Angulimala tried to kill Him, but could not keep pace with the Lord. He then shouted to the Lord to stop. The Lord said, "*I did stop. You are the one who does not stop.*" This phrase amazed Angulimala, and the conversation turned to the topic of sin. It was a turning point for Angulimala and he later became enlightened.



Rupananda (นางรูปนันทา), a female monk, was a perfect lady except for one defilement that prevented her from reaching enlightenment. She was deluded and attached to her beauty. Lord Buddha taught her to visualize a beautiful lady. The visionary lady gradually turned old, died and decomposed. This was an important lesson for her in overcoming her vanity.

The next story is not quite related to the disadvantaged. It is about *Phra Moggallana* (พระโมคคัลลานะ) who meditated and became sleepy. Lord Buddha suggested many methods to get over sleepiness such as standing up, poking the ears and wiping the face with water. And finally one could employ the *sihasayasana* (สีหไสยาสน์) method, in which one sleeps on one's right side, with one leg on top of the other, and determined the time of waking in order to continue meditation.

These are examples of many methods and tips available from reading Buddhist texts. I recommend the book *Anubuddhapravati* (อนุพุทธประวัติ) written by *Somdej Phramahasamanachao Kromphraya Vajiranavararasa* (สมเด็จพระมหาสมณเจ้ากรมพระยาวชิรญาณวโรรส) in 1920 and published many times as a good source for the study of education through the history of the disciples of Lord Buddha. I read it when I was little, and I liked it.

In the old days, most famous teachers who had a lot of students were *Brahmins* (พราหมณ์). They were called "*Brahmin mahasa*" (พราหมณ์มหาศาล). "*Mahasa*" (มหาศาล) here is "*mahasala*" (มหาศาลา), where "*maha*" (มหา) means "*big*," and "*sala*" (ศาลา) means "*school*". "*Mahasala*" means "*big school*".

School System

As society expanded, it became necessary to have a school system in which the teachers' main duty was teaching. They taught students step by step according to each student's talent. As the population



increased, more rules about curriculum, evaluation and student admissions were developed. Teachers now have less time for individualized instruction, and there are more considerations about budget and cost. System management has become the most important thing in achieving educational objectives.

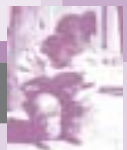
The people of a nation have to be educated to certain standards. In fact, the main aim is to educate *average* citizens—that is, the education is mainly for the mean, the majority. Disadvantaged groups lie on the slim sides of the normal curve. They are at the margins of society. To improve the situation for the disadvantaged requires moving the normal curve to the right or increasing the overall academic level to a higher position so that all benefit from the improvement of the *average* group.

Education of the Disadvantaged

I will now talk about the 15 disadvantaged groups from my own experience in education. Educators cannot solve all problems because some solutions lie outside the education system. Nevertheless, educators have to explain to others, exchange views, learn from others, and convince them to solve the problems to achieve educational objectives.

Group 1: *People in Disadvantaged, Remote Areas*

This group includes those living in areas difficult to access or far away from transportation routes. Sometimes the isolated areas may have a good standard of living, but mostly they are deprived by virtue of their inaccessibility. Rich land usually attracts people who then build transportation routes and no longer live far away from transportation. However, areas still exist that are very difficult to access. Children take all day to go to school even where there are reasonably good roads. I once understood that small, short-legged children walked more slowly than their stronger teachers did. In fact, the children walk more quickly. Even the strong border patrol policemen who are their teachers walk more slowly than the children do. In areas like this, most teachers cannot stay because they suffer physically and mentally from social



conditions. As a result, there is a shortage of teachers. Sometimes teachers want to go there, but there are no civil service positions available for them. Sometimes teachers go there just to take positions and then request a transfer to other places, thus taking those positions with them. This once again leaves remote areas with a problem. In cases where there are no positions available, temporary teachers must be hired. In some places the hired teachers are paid, but in others there may be no money to pay them. A further problem is when there are no applicants for temporary jobs.

For many years I have paid for many temporary teachers. This is not difficult. For example, if a school wants to hire a primary school teacher, the Provincial Primary School Office can select one teacher to take the job. I simply transfer the money to the office to pay for the salary. The difficulty is that while I had intended to support 3 teachers, they reported that they were short of 400 teachers.

The Ministry of Education can function as the center for people who want to donate money for this purpose. I have asked those who donated money for the construction of schools whether they would be willing to donate money to hire teachers. They answered "yes" if they were assured that the money actually went to the teachers. At the university level, similar donations for visiting professors acknowledging the names of the donors have proven successful. The same system can be implemented for primary school teachers.

There are already some teachers hired from funds or loan money provided by government agencies or by individual donors, but there is still a serious shortage of teachers. Community learning centers such as the Thai Hilltribe Community Learning Centers also need teachers. These centers have not yet reached the status of a school. Teachers in the deprived areas work very hard. They teach and do many other things. I once found two teachers teaching eight classes from kindergarten to Grade 6. They also cook for their students and coordinate with helpers to do the cooking.



The new system allocates the government budget to local authorities at the sub-district level (Sub-district Administrative Office). Some authorities manage it well by coordinating with people in communities and delegating authority to others. Teachers can receive help from parents and agriculture officials. Teachers can also take care of their students' health concerns.

Some schools do not have enough rice to eat. Children come to school for rice. I have had to provide them with rice. Teachers manage the situation quite well and also receive help from public health officials. I once met a border patrol policeman who held a baby in his arms and said proudly that he himself had delivered the baby. However, this example should be taken as an extreme case. Normally when public health personnel are not there, traditional midwives are available and can deliver babies. Some midwives have never been trained, so they might do it not quite up to the hygienic standard. In this case, training is helpful to teach the midwives about hygiene. Maybe it would be easier to train the teachers first and then they can pass on the knowledge about cleanliness to midwives.

In many places there is a shortage of teaching materials such as kit books and reference books for children and teachers, television programs via satellites and computers. By coordinating with local people, they can at least help reduce the difficulty of educating disadvantaged children. Furthermore, periodic teacher training is helpful. Older children can also teach younger ones; for example, those in Grades 4-6 can teach 1st graders. It is said that this system works well. If the older children can be trained to teach, perhaps they can help.

In other deprived areas, children do not have a chance to study. There are no schools for several reasons. For example, some children live in conservation zones where schools are not permitted. Other may live so far away that no teacher wants to go and teach them, or there may be too few students to satisfy a cost-benefit analysis. It is not cost-effective, and so this has led to the closing of schools. In this case there is a project to bring children to schools far away from their homes. This has proven to be very effective.



Many parents are very eager to help build schools. Some parents helped build rice storage for their children at schools. I once visited a school in which there were a lot of children, with over 100 children in kindergarten. The parents were Hmong and they had built camps to lodge their children. They took turns, two at a time, taking care of the children. These parents wanted to help the teachers. The weak point was that the children lacked family warmth. Further, their local and traditional cultures tended to be absorbed by the new culture introduced by the teachers who were mostly from outside the area. Nevertheless, this is better than not studying at all. Family warmth can be compensated for by teachers' attentiveness. The good point is that the children had a chance to learn and practice helping themselves.

In many places that I have visited, I have observed that remote schools tend to have more dormitories for girls than for boys. The reasons for this are not yet clear. Perhaps the boys must help out at home. I have offered scholarships to the boys, but they often refuse and claim that they must stay to help their families. In rural Cambodia, I was told that male students can live in a temple, or with another family, but female students cannot. Some of the girls were very capable and built a small shack next to their school. Dormitories are helpful to attract more children to schools, even though the problem of separation from their parents remains. Although no system is perfect, we must choose among various solutions and different opinions.

The 15 groups of the disadvantaged exist in all countries, not just in Thailand. Education in deprived areas, where there is a shortage of teachers, has always lagged behind that in urban areas. The other day I met a student from a deprived area who is studying at Srinakharinwirot University. She said that she was very happy there and the professors took good care of her. She had good friends, and the courses were interesting, but she had a hard time following some classes. The most difficult part for her and her friends was learning English. In this case, they need special tutors or tutorial classes during summer vacations, and we can ask people to help.



I recently met the Director General of the Department of Non-formal Education at a Community Learning Center. He remarked that the problem in the deprived areas was that there was no continuity of teachers. Yet they cannot be stopped from departing. I think we have to establish a system for departing teachers to hand over their work to new ones. We have to solve each problem as it occurs.

Distance learning via satellites is very useful for disadvantaged children. From my observation, some children cannot concentrate when they learn from TV monitors. They do poorly in examinations. When I asked them why, they said it was because learning from a TV was not the same as studying with a live teacher. I told them that they must find some techniques to learn by this method. I suggested they and their teacher compete in note-taking and later compare and review their notes. Some claim that memorization is not a good learning technique, whereas focusing on thinking skills helps people become wiser. I think revising lessons over and over is good for the group with average intelligence, just like Phra Culapanthaka, who was enlightened by continuously wiping the white cloth. Some slow learners cannot keep up with others if they do not review their notes. I also found some people who liked distance learning more than learning with teachers in person. The disadvantaged are eager to learn and try harder when they have a chance to learn, even with the distance learning method.

Group 2: *People with No Money to Study*

At present, many organizations here and abroad help find sponsors to support this group. In China, there is a project called *Project Hope* to provide opportunities for children who otherwise do not have a chance to study. They make announcements to seek those who are interested in donating money to the Ministry of Education. Some donors are laborers and some are housewives. They do not have to be rich people. The project aims to match each donor with a child. The donor gets to see the child's photograph and receives letters from the child. Some donors support the children all the way to higher education. In some cases there are loans for education. I have seen many cases in which fees



and tuition are not very high, but accessories such as required clothing, education materials, and food are expensive. Those who cannot afford these necessities may not be able to study.

Group 3: People of Limited Intelligence

For this group, appropriate teaching techniques are the solution. There are many types of individuals with limited intelligence. Eventually there may be cases where we should direct them to do things that are most suitable for them. We have to talk more about the guidance provided for students to make appropriate educational choices and to select careers that are appropriate for their level of intelligence.

Group 4: Inpatients

Today, many hospitals have study programs available for children with chronic illnesses. Many of their teachers are from the Department of Non-Formal Education. At present there are many teaching aids to help teachers with students at different levels. But the management of such teaching is difficult because some students are too sick to learn. During economic downturn, young patients have to leave the hospital sooner and to rest at home regardless how chronic the illness is. This interrupts their education.

I used to help in a hospital computer learning program and experienced the difficulty of the situation. Once the patients left the hospital, they were forgotten. The hospital did not have a large enough budget to support them. Nevertheless, those who took the lessons learned quite well. There are also cases of nutrition deficiency which I have talked about many times already.

Group 5: People with Physical or Mental Disabilities

Currently, this group has more opportunities for education. There are various special techniques to access knowledge or to prepare people with disabilities for learning. Sometimes it is not just about teaching



techniques, but it involves advanced preparation of appropriate facilities. For example, the blind cannot easily walk up the stairs of a university. They have to learn to balance themselves, know directions and learn to help themselves. Those who have already trained themselves will not have problems. Problems persist because facilities for the disabled are costly.

When I visited New York City about two months before the terrorists' attack, I met a person with a well functioning brain, but the rest of her body was immobile. Her eyes shone, reflecting her feelings, although she could not even breathe by herself. She had graduated from Harvard University with the help of many machines. Such equipment is very expensive and not available for everyone. She is a good example of a person in a difficult situation who does not give up.

I have seen many places where it is difficult to go to school. Although now there are wheelchairs, the roads are not designed to facilitate them. I once donated bicycles for children to ride to school. I followed up this project to find out whether the bicycles were used or not. They asked, *"How can I use them? The road is full of mud all the way. I'd rather not carry my bicycle."* You can imagine how impossible it is for wheelchairs.

In many places, teachers do not have the skills to deal with people with disabilities. If teachers were properly trained, it would be helpful. But one district may have just one or two disabled students, so the question is whether or not this particular teacher training is cost effective. But it has to be done soon because it is very helpful. I once met a very good teacher at one school. She was kind to her one disabled student, who seemed happy and well taken care of, but the teacher taught the child nothing because she did not know how to. In another incident, there was a big child at a pre-school center. The child did not seem mentally impaired. I thought he was just a gigantic preschool child, but in fact he was 7 or 8 years old and deaf. The school did not admit deaf children, and his parents did not know what to do. He was put in the preschool because he was accepted there. He should have been put in a special school but his parents were worried about sending him far away to study.



There are solutions available for people with physical disabilities, but for people with mental disabilities, the problems are more complex, more difficult to solve, and operate at various levels. For example, there were cases of good students who had seizures when they sat for exams.

Group 6: *Orphans*

The Suksasongkroh Schools (Welfare Schools) can help this group immensely. Teachers in these schools must also be trained to function as the heads of the families.

Group 7: *Children of Transient People*

The parents of this group, such as construction workers, do not have permanent jobs. There was once construction at the palace and I observed children running around. I arranged for them to have baths, organized a class and a teacher for them, and had their health checked by the palace doctors. Their parents and the children were pleased. The children were lovely and happy with the snacks that they were given. In this group, some were grown enough to go to school, but they did not study because they had to follow their parents each time they moved to a new construction site. I put them in the Bang Gruay (บางกรวย) Suksasongkroh School, which had been built originally for children whose families lived on boats and moved about to earn their livings. With the decrease in the number of families living on boats, the school is now open for all children from poor or struggling families. They can live in dormitories or houses at the school. Some can live with their relatives who do not move about. Some government or non-government agencies arrange for teachers to teach at the sites where the parents work. It works out fine for children of construction workers, but for others, such as laborers in sugar cane farms that are more widely dispersed, it is difficult to manage in this way.



Group 8: Street Children

The Red Cross Federation has asked the Thai Red Cross to take care of this group. They are considered a marginal population and a group at risk. We may help by giving them shelter and developing better living conditions for them.

Group 9: Child Laborers, Child Soldiers and Child Sex Workers

It is not right to let children do the work of grownups. This is condemned all over the world because child laborers are harmed mentally and physically by such work. They also lack an opportunity for an education that could improve their lives. Solutions include putting the employers in jail or boycotting products made by child laborers. Many people do not agree with these methods of control because some children have to earn money to support their families. If they do not work, their families suffer and they may resort to worse actions. Perhaps there should be a compromise. Children who earn money for their families should be provided with education, recreation and improved working conditions. In most factories, laborers have an opportunity to enroll in non-formal education to upgrade themselves for better jobs and better pay. This may be more useful to them than leaving their jobs to go to school, especially in the present economic conditions in which they may lose their job opportunities.

Children who have been recruited to the military or forced to become sex workers must be helped by educators to recover their mental health. Thai Government has never allowed child soldiers, but I witnessed one in a deprived area almost 30 years ago. He had already died when I learned of it. I asked his parents why they had faked the child's age so that he could volunteer. The official had not checked his birth certificate carefully and the boy became a ranger soldier to earn his living just because his family did not have enough to eat.



Group 10: *People with No Opportunity to Study during Childhood*

Non-formal education or adult education can help this group a great deal. These people had to help support their families during their childhood and so did not continue in secondary school. They now have opportunities to study through educational programs provided via radio, television, the post, public libraries and computer-aided instruction. Teachers can also study computer skills. The elderly now have a chance to learn the Internet, sometimes taught by children. I once sponsored a computer training course, a trainee is allowed to bring his or her child. Children learned about computers faster than adults, and thus they could help their parents at home. Nowadays, there are many new subjects that even highly educated people in the past did not know. Knowledge advances very quickly and everyone should have an opportunity to study throughout life. The subjects need to be open to all, and taught at all levels. This is *lifelong education*.

From the sociological viewpoint, one's life usually follows a linear order, starting from attending school in childhood, growing up, getting a job, starting a family, and raising children, but life from now on will resemble a patchwork which has no particular order. Working and going to school, training while working to improve work skills, or studying and raising a family at the same time will be normal situations in modern society. Those who are responsible for educational management have to adapt to these changes to provide opportunities for these groups. In the past, some drafted soldiers could neither read nor write. Primary education in Thailand has since been improved and extended to the whole country. This has made it easier for drafted soldiers to take non-formal education lessons to finish their secondary education while they serve in the military. They are also trained in vocational education before they leave the military. Despite budget cuts due to the economic downturn, the policy is still there to provide an educational opportunity for soldiers at all levels. To be promoted to the next higher rank, training is necessary. This is also a system of lifelong education.



Group 11: *Prison Inmates*

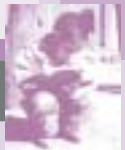
Prison inmates usually receive their basic education in prison and can pursue higher education in certain educational institutes, for example, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. The commencement ceremony is then held in the prison. My friend who had taught in the prison told me that students in the prison paid more attention than those she taught in schools. This might be because they are not distracted by other things. The problem remains that they still have difficulties finding jobs when they leave the prison. Employers are still afraid to hire them, particularly those convicted for murder. While facing these disadvantages, they are still very proud of their education and this nourishes their hearts. They also have an opportunity to initiate their own small or medium enterprises. Child inmates without criminal records are not as serious a problem.

I have experience helping prison inmates with computer education. It works well because they pay much attention. They can even earn money while in jail from their computer work such as printing business cards and typing manuscripts for which they are paid according to the number of pages they type.

Group 12: *Refugees, Illegal Immigrants, and People with No Nationality*

Refugees and illegal immigrants are similar, yet their status is not exactly the same. Those who have refugee status receive special opportunities and treatment from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In many host countries, including Thailand, these people are not recognized as refugees. They are *illegal immigrants*. The countries which accept illegal immigrants may not allow them to go to school.

Migration is a big issue. There is migration from natural disasters and man-made disasters, which may be even more dangerous than natural ones. The most serious case is migration to another country to flee violence of wars. Last year there was a conference to commemorate



the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Convention on International Humanitarian Law. The sensitive issue of displaced people was also discussed. Any organization working on this problem must first respect them as human beings.

UNHCR is the UN organization that takes care of refugees. It has established the ***Refugee Education Trust*** that aims to help refugees access secondary and higher education. I have discussed the issue with Madam Ogata, the former High Commissioner of UNHCR. She invited me to join and I accepted. To reach the goal we must overcome the problem of financing the project. There is also a concern about educational policy of the host country that may not agree with ours.

The reason we should give educational opportunity to immigrants – besides the fact that access to education is a fundamental human right – is because they have witnessed war and are affected mentally. In turn, these people may create difficulties with negative effects on society. There is a saying, "*Education provides the opportunity to choose: the opportunity to choose peace*". We have a lot of problems nowadays because people choose to fight rather than to live in peace. If they receive education, they have an opportunity to choose peace. You can donate, or get more information from the website www.unhcr-50.org.

I had experience working with refugees when I finished my undergraduate study and began working at the Thai Red Cross. The organization aims at helping all people regardless of nationality, status or religion. At that time I was just 23 or 24 years old. I felt caught in between the Red Cross mission to help all and the question why we should help so many Cambodians, Laotians and others while the Thais remained poor. Some people also feared that so many refugees might cause problems of national security.

In education, we tried to compromise and did our best, but whatever we did was not up to the UNHCR standard. Even Thai people at that time did not get much because of limited resources. The UNHCR had its own curriculum. The required textbooks were very expensive, and thus not affordable. At that time I contacted a teacher training college, now



Chantaburi Rajabhat Institute, to help out with the curriculum. It was sufficiently good. The aim was to give these students enough knowledge that would enable them to adapt well in the third country. The result was quite satisfactory and it did not cost too much.

Some refugees received better education than they would have in their own countries. For example, poor people or women who otherwise would not have had educational opportunities could study in the refugee camps, and they wanted to further their education to the higher level.

I would also like to discuss the group of people who live along the border of Thailand. Some do not have a citizenship. It is difficult to prove their nationalities. They say they were born in Thailand, but they do not have a document to prove it. They are unable to receive any government services. I visited some sites and provided teachers, but it is prohibited to issue any certificates to the students. The newspapers once reported about a teacher who went to teach them and was subsequently reprimanded by his superiors.

As the situation has improved, they have been able to study from primary to secondary and vocational levels. Some could even get into universities, but some were refused by all institutions. In this case I tried to provide vocational training for them. At least they could earn their living sufficiently. Some lived in protected forest areas in which school buildings were not allowed. A few days ago, someone told me that he wanted to donate money for school construction. The Forestry Department refused on the grounds that they must protect forests for the benefit of the whole country, not just that of one community. Perhaps there has to be some adjustment to the policy of the defined proportion of forested area, or the banning of construction in areas sloping over 30°. Perhaps there should be a compromise for school construction, or a transfer of people to a more appropriate area. But in some cases, it is impossible to move people out. There must be dialogue among many organizations to help out in these cases.



Group 13: *People Who Do Not Understand the Language of Instruction*

People whose native tongue is different from the official language used in schools cannot understand the educational content thoroughly, resulting in low achievement in education. This is a problem not only in Thailand, but in developed countries in Europe and North America as well. For example, children of labor migrants in the southern region of the United States of America speak Spanish. I once visited a school there. They taught in both Spanish and English before they taught in English alone. I have a friend who is a teacher in a school at the border, where parents are also being helped to learn English at school.

In Europe, I visited a place in the former East Germany. There was a group of people called **Sorbs**, who were related to the people in the Czech Republic. Their languages are quite similar. They are Western Slavic. The street signs in that area are in both Slavic and German. They were pleased with the German policy to promote their indigenous culture. There is a primary school in which the Sorbian language is used. I wondered how they were going to further their education if they did not learn German. The answer was that they mostly studied in German.

In Thailand, there are many schools in which students have low Thai language and particularly low mathematics achievements. Thai people are usually quite good in mathematics and achieve good scores. But the children with a different language received low scores in mathematics because they did not understand the language of mathematics problems and solutions. I asked whether it was possible to have tutors who speak Karen, and could teach Thai in Thai and Mathematics in both Thai and Karen languages. I am not sure if this is a good policy, because at secondary or university levels there may be no one to teach in Karen. It is difficult even to teach in Thai. I mentioned the lack of teachers in secondary schools to the Ministry of Education, and I could not resist hiring a physics teacher for the school. I did not hire teachers for other subjects, and so they are still disadvantaged in learning other subjects.



It is difficult just to get a Thai-speaking physics teacher to teach in the school. So if he has to teach in Lua or Hmong language, it might be even more difficult.

In Germany, migrant workers do not understand German and therefore cannot have the same level of education as the German. How could one know how many classrooms should be built for these new comers, since it is difficult to predict their number and movement? I have not yet asked the German how they deal with this problem.

Group 14: People in a Society that Does Not Value Education

This is a difficult problem. Awareness raising to inform the society and individual families about the importance of education may help. Sometimes they claim that going to school costs money, whereas working earns money. I used to ask them how much money they earned from being workers, and I would pay them that much so that they would go to school. This is how the work-study project or the scholarship project for the disadvantaged was conceived. It is a question of opportunity cost for those who choose to become educated.

Group 15: Intelligent or Highly Gifted People

This problem is on the decrease because there are more and more teachers who understand and give more opportunity for talented and gifted children to develop to their full potential. These people can be a big problem if they have not been taken care of well. They can cause problems for both gifted and other children in the class. At present, there is a system in which each child can be tested individually to monitor development. In deprived or poverty areas, this is impossible. Teachers have to handle the whole class. I once knew about one gifted child studying with other children in the class. The result was that the gifted student suffered, and so did his classmates. His friends said that it was not because they did not like him, but when the teacher asked something, he would answer and then ask questions. The teacher then answered,



and both took over the conversation about something that others could not follow and subsequently became bored about. He became annoying for the rest of the class. In this case, if the teacher can manage this type of person, there should be no problem. Sometimes too many rules and regulations may block the ability and thinking of gifted and talented children.

I am not certain whether we should arrange classes according to the level of students' intelligence, i.e., gifted children in one class, slow learners in another, so that appropriate techniques can be used to suit each group. However, teachers say that in practice it would be very tiring to teach low-achieving children all in one class. They would disturb one another, thus making it impossible to learn. It is better to mix good and poor students, so that they can persuade one another to learn.

Education for All: From Jomtien 1990 to Dakar 2000

The last topic is about *Education for All*, a global target adopted at international conferences in Jomtien in 1990 and Dakar in 2000.

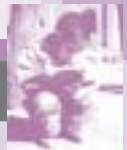
Education for the disadvantaged at present and in the future should be in many forms. In the globalized world, we have to be more open. We have to observe how they do it in other countries. What are their philosophies? What are their values? We cannot just look at the group that we are interested in helping. Loving kindness must not be limited to just our own group. In the present world situation, any event – for example, the bombing of Afghanistan – can be viewed right on our televisions. Everyone can see what happens at the same time. So we need to know about other countries. I have heard people say that Thai people, like other Eastern peoples, value being in a group and the unity of the group, whereas Westerners value individualism. I mentioned in the beginning that what we have done has mostly focused on the average people in the population. For the disadvantaged who are minority groups, we have a limited budget so we think that we have to take care of those who have higher potential to help develop the country first. The



disadvantaged are helped only as charity. We cannot continue like this any more because excluded groups are also world citizens. This is the new frame of thought.

When I was helping immigrants, my heart was torn between the idea of patriotism and that of a broader perspective. I was a Thai and was brought up to love my country very much. I had the duty and responsibility to Thailand and the Thai people. Why did I have to reach out any farther? On the other hand, Her Majesty the Queen chaired the Red Cross, and she encouraged me to become more open. At that time I did not think that I had to do that, but now I see that it is a universal concept. It is also the concept of *metta*, compassion or a desire to make others happy, in Buddhism. *Metta* is for all people regardless of nationality, status or religion. That reflects the same concept. From now on, we have to educate people in the new society in a new way. One person needs to earn his/her living and to learn at the same time. One needs to have a career to earn their living, but one also has to devote some part to work that gives them pride, not money.

I would like to talk a little about "*From Jomtien to Dakar*". About 10 years ago there was an international conference at Jomtien, Chonburi in Thailand. I presided over that conference on behalf of His Majesty the King. Last year (2000) in April, it was in Dakar, Senegal. Delegates from over 180 countries of different developmental stages went to the conference. Each made a pledge for quality education, at least primary education, for all. This means that the disadvantaged are to receive education. At Dakar, they aimed to achieve it by the year 2015. At Jomtien, they had set the target by the year 2000, but it did not succeed so they extended it to 2015. Now we are trying to educate all, especially poor children who are the major disadvantaged group in poor countries, to have at least primary education. It is an attempt being made by many countries working together with international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, IMF, WHO, FAO and international NGOs. The motto is "*Education for All*". They say that education can help solve many problems.



In my observation, this is similar to what we have been saying in Thailand. For example, education increases family income and improves child nutrition. Maternal and infant deaths are reduced when women are educated. Statistics in Africa show that 20% of children of uneducated mothers died in childhood, whereas only 12% died if the mothers were educated for 5 years. Educated teenagers were affected with AIDS at a lower rate than those who were uneducated. Children in schools can receive proper vaccination, necessary vitamins and nutrients. One statistic shows that 130 million children have never had any education and more than 150 million children have left schools before Grade 4. I would like to confirm whether or not these statistics are correct, for there may be even more. Fewer girls have gone to school. Some suggest that increasing the number of female teachers and other facilities such as toilets for females could help. They also talk about poor countries with a lot of debt that need donations from other countries. Sometimes the donor countries and the recipient countries do not have the same idea or policy. To succeed, we need more teachers, more professional development of teachers, more schools, more participative planning and budget planning. We have to see how things are going to be in the year 2015.

Concluding Remarks

Everyone says education is very important, but when it comes to practice, priorities are given to other things such as debt reduction or fighting AIDS. This is because education is a chronic problem from all angles. It is very difficult to solve.

My intention today is to brainstorm ideas rather than thoroughly explain every single topic. Further research would certainly be useful, whereas I have focused on what I have heard and experienced. My talk today does not suffice as a reference because it is far from complete.

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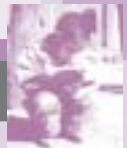




Preschool children at the **Baan Kuanmeechai** (บ้านกวนมีชัย) **Border Patrol Police School**, Wang Ang District (ตำบลวังอ่าง), Cha-uad (อำเภอชะอวด), Nakorn Si Thammarat Province (จังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช). There are 8 classes and 230 students from preschool to Grade 6.



The kitchen of the above border patrol police school. There has been the Agriculture-for-School-Lunch Project. Now the Ministry of Education receives a government budget of 6 Baht per student spent through local district authorities. Some schools outsource it. Others buy materials to cook by themselves. Food materials may be delivered daily, but in case they are far away the deliveries may be twice a week. Sometimes housewives are hired to do the job.





Students at the **Baan Kuantabag** (บ้านควนตะแบก) **Border Patrol Police School, Pa Payom** (อำเภอป่าพะยอม), Pattalung Province (จังหวัดพัทลุง), helped raise chickens in the Agriculture-for-School-lunch Project. There are 8 classes and 100 students from preschool to Grade 6 in this school. In chicken raising, students are taught how to calculate the investment cost, even though the chicks are given by the government. They also have to write reports. (Once they reported that there had been 40 chickens, and 3 were “murdered” in the kitchen for cooking.)



Vegetable gardens under nets in the Agriculture-for-School-Lunch Project of the **Pracharathbarmung** (ประชารัฐบำรุง) **School No.2** at Community No. 1, Koh Tao District (ตำบลเกาะเต่า), Pa Payom (อำเภอป่าพะยอม), Pattalung Province (จังหวัดพัทลุง). This school was a border patrol police school before, but now it is a school under the Pattalung Primary Education Office. At present there are 219 students from kindergarten to Grade 6.





A child at school age had to be a soldier instead of going to school. The gun seems taller than he does. This picture is from a brochure of the Refugee Education Trust, entitled "A Promise Not a Dream". The phrase, "Make a promise today and you will be making a vital difference in the world" is to promote the importance of education.



Refugees with disabilities can learn, play and work just like other people, if they are given opportunities.





One of the 9 refugee schools in Nepal. The teacher was also a refugee. There were 40,000 students. At primary education level, boys and girls have an equal opportunity, but girls have much less opportunity when it comes to secondary education.



*An outdoor school
in a deprived area in Mali, Africa.*

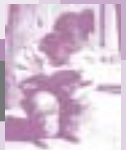




Education in many developing countries, not just in Thailand, lacks just about everything.

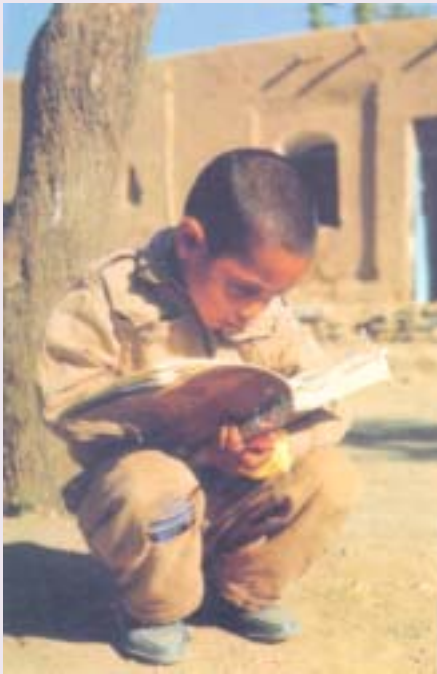


Teaching women in Africa to read and write helps them develop a better quality of life.





*Lifelong education.
No one is too old to learn.*



*A poor child was attentively reading a book. This picture is from the book entitled **Letters of Life**, published by UNESCO in 1991. (During my childhood, while following Her Majesty the Queen to the seaside, I saw that she gathered the fishermen on the beach and had someone teach them so that they could read the instructions to improve their work skills.)*



*Two children in **Tirana, Albania**, had to search piles of garbage for something saleable to help the parents earn their living. They did not have a chance to go to school.*



*A poor boy was selling flowers at the side of a street in **Lithuania**, a Baltic state. The country used to belong to the Soviet Union. This picture is from a 1999 UN-published book .*



Photo credits

Pages 25-26 :

Bureau of the Thai Royal Household

Pages 27 (top and bottom) and page 28 (top) :

A Promise Not a Dream, Brochure of Refugee Education Trust.
Geneva

Page 28 (bottom), page 29 (top and bottom)

and page 30 (top and bottom) :

Dominique Roger (photographs), Federico Mayor (introduction)
Lettres de Vie/Letters of Life. Paris: NATHAN, UNESCO, 1991.
p.47, p.91, p.94, p.109, p.111.

Page 31 (top and bottom) :

Alexandre Zouev, ed. ***Generation in Jeopardy. Children in
Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union***.

London: UNICEF, 1999.

p.66, p.104.