

Social Sector Decentralization and Human Welfare in Thailand

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A study to review the variety of decentralization policies and programs of social service sector, namely, health, education and social welfare services was conducted. The methodologies adopted were the review and analysis of government documents and materials, papers, articles including newspaper articles and news items pertaining to decentralization policies and programs and, the interview of key informants by means of in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Results of the study showed that after nearly half a century of existence, decentralization in Thailand is still at its infancy. To date, different types of about 8,000 local self-government units may have been established. Yet there was no single public sector, either at the central and provincial government or local self-government levels ever has actual experience in the implementation of decentralized policies and programs. What have been practiced to date are the delegation and deconcentration of functions and responsibilities with limited authority to local self-government units. The study concluded that attempts to decentralize, either through legal and administrative reforms and the policy statement on decentralization made by successive governments or both, have been hampered by bureaucrats who will be or expected to be affected by the decentralized policies and programs and by the grass roots' lack of knowledge, understanding, interest and willingness to participate in the local affairs.