

ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL PENSION FOR ALL IN THAILAND: TURNING ECONOMIC CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY

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Context

- One of the fastest ageing countries in SEA and in the world
- People over 60 make up 11% of the total population
- In 15 yrs, the older population will increase to 19.8%, and nearly 30% by 2050
- In 10 yrs, the older population will outnumber children

Context

- A range of old age pension schemes for people working in the formal sector, but the majority of informal workers is not covered
- On-going discussions on extending old age pensions to cover informal workers through an establishment of a national contributory scheme. Social pensions not on agendas
- Changing political situation – 3 Prime Ministers in 2008!
- Economic recession caused by the global financial crisis and Adverse impact on older people

Strategic actions undertaken

Formulation of advocacy objective and key messages

- Objective
 - >To increase coverage of the NSP

Strategic actions undertaken

- Key messages:
 - > Older people's contributions and rights
 - > Reducing poverty and promoting income security in old age
 - > Contributing to local economic growth
 - > Affordable

Strategic actions undertaken

- Identifying target audiences from different sectors
 - > government
 - > academia
 - > Civil society
 - > UN body
 - > Media
 - > Political party

Strategic actions undertaken

- Building capacity of key stakeholders
 - > At least 50 government officials and members from civil society participated a high level international, regional and national training & workshop

Strategic actions undertaken

- Studies and publications:
 - > Implementation and impact
 - > Analysis of financial feasibility
 - > Country specific & local language and experiences from other countries
- Used to support awareness raising and argue the need for social pensions

Strategic actions undertaken

- Building alliances
 - > Formation of the **social pension working group** with members from different sectors
 - > Linkage with other civil society groups and networks with interest in pension issues
 - > Consultation with key persons to seek support (NCOA, advisors to PM and ministers, academia)

Strategic actions undertaken

- Raising awareness
 - > Event (National forum, ADA, IDOP)
 - > Participation in pension related meetings
 - > Working with media
 - visit to project sites by journalist
 - writing articles
 - interview older people and other key stakeholders
 - press conference
 - provision of key information

Positive changes from 2007- present

- Extension of the national social pension programme (NSP) was considered as part of the country's immediate economic stimulus package
- NSP changed from using means-tested to pension-tested approach
- Older people covered by the NSP has increased from 25% to 73%
- Media coverage of older people's issues greatly increased
- Increased recognition of older people's rights

Key learning

- Building capacity of key stakeholders, particularly the government sector
- Building alliances beyond the ageing network & working group
- Economic crisis and political competition can be turned into opportunity for advocacy on social pensions

Way forward

- To further advocate for a national law on old age security so that the extension will become permanent.

Key features will include:

- Increase in the amount of the social pension benefit to reach the poverty line & periodical review
- Change the social pension scheme to the universal approach
- > Extend the social pension scheme to permanent residents (non-citizen)

Thank you