Human Resources Development for Health in Asia: 
"Efforts of the ASEAN Institute for Health Development"

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The ASEAN Institute for Health Development (AIHD) was established in 1982 with strong support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). AIHD aims to support the global strategy of "Health for All" through the primary health care approach advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is valid for ASEAN countries. AIHD has three key missions, namely education, academic services, and research and development, focusing on participatory community-based health and related program management, with a special emphasis on "Health for All" through human capacity building and community empowerment. To date the AIHD serves for more than 80 countries around the world covered more than 20,000 participants (academics, graduates, researchers and trainees) in various programs. AIHD alumni are now serving various areas in public health as international experts and contribute enormously to the health of the population in their countries.

Health care work force in Asia and globally are facing with the diverse society. A diverse society varies from different cultures, races and ethnicities. For health related factors, a diverse society brings with different levels of environmental and cultural related health risk influences such as: different foods, drinks, social relationships, religions and ideas which enhance its survival. Cohen et al. (2002) suggest four practical reasons can be put forth for attaining greater diversity in the health care workforce: (1) advancing cultural competency, (2) increasing access to high quality health care services, (3) strengthening the medical research agenda, and (4) ensuring optimal management of the health care system. The AIHD initiated and developed training courses with the concern of enhancing skills and competency to work with the diversity of the workplace. Apart from diverse participants, learners and trainees, the AIHD also recruits staff from multi-cultural background, such as Korea, India, Iran, and South Africa.

The teaching activities have adopted concepts in accordance with the WHO Guidelines for preparing of a health care workforce for the 21st century (WHO, 2005), which emphasize management over cure, and long-term over episodic care, and identifies a core set of competencies to improve care for chronic conditions. By also being a patient focused service approach, the health care workforce in the 21st century must develop communication skills that empower patients through seeing health from the patient's perspective, and motivating and training patients in health-related self-management, capable of creating and maintaining partnerships with everyone involved, and needs skills that ensure continuous quality improvement in terms of patient safety and service delivery efficiency.

The education and training curriculum had also integrated concepts of green environments.
energy saving, integrated social and cultural aspects of health services, enhance community participation and empowering communities as keys for sustainable development. The AIHD makes the key partners also aware of an increased competition in the labor market, free flow of money, information, products and people, using high level technology, different compensation systems, and highly competitive health care and education businesses. Thus, working in partnership and create competitive advantages is one of the key survival strategies of the AIHD. To modernize our training and management, the AIHD utilizes and integrates business management concepts in operation such as marketing and advertising strategies. The teaching and training outcome focuses on 21st century skills; intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual development, and beyond outside world (inner world). We also equip our students with clear understanding of gathering related current situations that burden on public health services such as chronic diseases, burden of diseases, universal health coverage and health equity.

Current activities related to the development of human resources for health are implemented through formal national, regional and international networks such as Thailand Public Health Education Institution Network (THAIPHIEN); The South East Asian Public Health Education Institution Network (SEAPHEIN: www.seaphein.com); South East Asian Primary Health care Innovative (SEAPIN: www.seapin.org) and many other local and international networks.

Another guiding principle of the AIHD operational strategies are that the services and curriculum must be marketable, evaluated if the current services is reaching the point of saturation to develop and generate new services that respond to the needs and leads to effective and efficient solving of current public health problems. Regarding research and networking, the AIHD impacts on the society/ stakeholders, solve current problems, prepare for future interventions, policy and implementation, and is gaining more recognition as excellence centre in global partnership. As an international organization, AIHD promotes joint academic collaboration through seminars, workshops, and conferences; explores new avenues for research collaboration and joint research projects; promote the exchange of academics, supporting staff and students; promote and invite external evaluators of both parties; explore opportunities for the mobility of the staff and students; and other areas of co-operation to be mutually agreed upon by the parties.

The future possible interactive collaboration between AIHD and academics and health institutions in Japan will include research, staff/student exchange, new business model development, co-training and education, and health program visits. The level of contact and collaboration will be interactive and collegial in the form of a twinning program which may achieve greater benefits for both countries, Japan and Thailand, in the near future.

References