**Annual Report**

**Southern Thailand Empowerment and Participation (STEP) Project**

**January - December 2012**

**UNDP Thailand Country Office**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. **INTRODUCTION……………………………………………….………………….3

*Project Objectives….………………………………………….………………....4***

***Stakeholders Consultation………………………………….……………….....4
Project Monitoring and Evaluation…………..………………………………..5
Project Audit…………………………………………………………..…………..6***

1. **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS……………………………………………….…………..7**
2. **SITUATION IN SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES...……………..……….31**
3. **IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.……….35**
4. **DISBURSEMENT AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION ……………..…….….37**

**ANNEX I: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS………………………………….….38**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Southern Thailand Empowerment and Participation (STEP) project provides the opportunity for a large number of stakeholders, both government and non-government, to come together with the aim to find common solutions to achieve social cohesion in the southern border provinces. Prince of Songkla University is the implementing partner in coordinating with responsible parties and stakeholders in the southern border provinces to address a wide range of challenges in the three southern border provinces and to contribute to the achievement of social cohesion and prevent further escalation of the conflict situation in the region.

The first six months of 2012 saw the research findings and recommendations being transferred into practice. Four national consultants were recruited to design practical implementation packages, pilot activities, training modules and policy recommendations for capacity development of local governments, legal awareness, community participation, and conflict prevention/resolution. The project made tremendous progress in the second half of 2012. Potential community-based organizations and civil society organizations have been identified for further cooperation in community development working towards social cohesion. The quality of journalistic coverage on the three southern border provinces has gradually been improved through alternative media and young journalism school. Vulnerable woman groups are equipped with technical knowledge on products and market access and are able to apply the knowledge to support sustainable livelihoods. Legal awareness and empowerment for local communities has been implemented through increasing effectiveness on legal services and reducing the occurrence of disputes that are based on misunderstandings of rights and legislations. Practical recommendation packages in mainstreaming conflict prevention/resolution and building social cohesion in local governance are in place. The project has shifted from data gathering to resolving natural resource and natural disaster management issues, and building capacity of government agencies and communities on disaster risk management/reduction. Alternative governance arrangements through peace dialogues are explored with conflict prevention/resolution mechanisms and tools in place.

1. ***Project Objectives***

The objective of the STEP Project is to address a wide range of challenges in the five southern border provinces of Thailand including political and socioeconomic issues by supporting activities that enhance capacity development, community empowerment and public participation in local governance in the hope that eventually the project will contribute to the achievement of social cohesion and prevent further escalation of the conflict situation in the region. The following are the main areas of project activities:

*Capacity development of community-based organizations*

* Strengthening institutional capacity of community-based organizations and media in promoting social cohesion;
* Improving income generation and employment opportunities of communities;
* Enhancing legal awareness and capacity for communities to access to effective dispute resolution mechanism.

*Capacity development of government agencies*

* Strengthening capacity of local government in participatory planning and budgeting;
* Strengthening local level natural resource and natural disaster management;
* Increasing knowledge of and exposure to a range of governance models and practices;
* Strengthen capacities of government officials at the provincial level to provide effective dispute resolution mechanisms.
1. ***Stakeholders Consultation***

*Project Executive Group (PEG)*

The Third Project Executive Group (PEG) Meeting for the STEP Project was held in Songkhla on Friday, 7 December 2012, to ensure the project’s progress towards the intended outputs, national ownership, ongoing stakeholders’ engagement, and sustainability, as well as outputs’ contribution to the intended outcomes. It was attended by 28 high-level representatives from PSU, UNDP and project responsible parties, and chaired by Mr Luc Stevens, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. While the PEG members were updated on the overall project implementation and management in 2012, and the work and budget plans for 2013 and 2014; the STEP Project was urged to ensure that its planning and implementation corresponds with the framework of the Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development 2012-2014, especially on decentralization and peace dialogues; and to increase stakeholders’ engagement and local participation to secure sustainability and national ownership. Considering the project’s duration in fully implementing its activities (from September 2011), the PEG members and the project responsible parties in the meeting agreed that it would be reasonable to extend the project implementation period until 2014 without additional funding required to ensure sustainability and effectiveness of the project.

The PEG members endorsed the following issues:

* Budget and work plan for 2013-2014
* No-cost extension of project period to 31 December 2014
* New project management structure, effective 1 January 2013



1. ***Project Monitoring and Evaluation***

Two monitoring visits were made in February and May 2012 to ensure that appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed, and that the project implementation is in accordance with the project specific outputs.

*Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (PMEC)*

To comply with the management arrangement in the STEP Project Document and as advised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the second Project Executive Group (PEG) meeting in July 2011, the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee was established in late 2011 with the appointment of focal points representing responsible parties to review the project progress, to provide technical advices for the project action plan and to monitor the project implementation. The first Project Monitoring/Working Group Meeting was organized on 21 February 2012 at the Institute for Peace Studies, PSU Hat Yai Campus, to review the project progress in 2011, to discuss and draw the project action plan for 2012 based on the seven project outputs. 20 monitoring focal points representing Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), PSU and UNDP attended the working group meeting.

*Project Monitoring Visit (PMV)*

Following the project audit in March 2012, the Project Monitoring Visit (PMV) undertaken by the team from UNDP Country Office, was conducted on 18 May 2012. The purposes of this periodic monitoring were:

1. to analyze the project management structure as well as the operational effectiveness of the Project Management Unit (PMU);
2. to identify strengths and weaknesses of the PMU;
3. to respond to the audit findings and recommendations; and
4. to propose recommendations on STEP Project’s operation and administration, increasing PMU’s effectiveness.

The recommendation letter from UNDP Country Office was submitted to PSU to review the existing programme management structure, separating the roles/duties of project assurance and project management, to ensure smooth implementation of project activities and management.

1. ***Project Audit***

The project audit was conducted from 12 to 16 March 2012 to ensure that all transactions made in 2010 and 2011 were executed in accordance with the management's authorization and recorded properly, and that the project assets purchased up to 31 December 2011 were safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition in accordance with the regulations of the National Implemented Modality (NIM) project.

The audit findings rated a medium risk for the project’s verifying process and for the lack of supporting documents for some payments. The audit recommendations were provided to both UNDP and PSU. The STEP Project took immediate and full responsibility to comply with the recommendations. The review, verification, approval and assurance process by the STEP PMU and the management committee was set up in July 2012 to ensure project accountability and effectiveness.

1. **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

The project has contributed positively to three UNDAF outcomes: access to quality social services and protection; decentralization and provincial and local governance; and environment and natural resources management. The key achievements against the project objectives can be described as follows:

***Key achievements against the project objectives***

1. Strengthening institutional capacity of community-based organization
* The capacity of local academic people and institutes has been strengthened, and research papers for specific purposes have been published and disseminated for community development planning, policy recommendations and data reference.
* 549 people from various communities and local authorities participated in the decision-making process in assessing the existing SBPAC’s Peace Community Development Project to enable people in the community to be self-sustained.
* A 150-page assessment report prepared for SBPAC’s Peace Community Development Project was distributed to 44 districts in the five border provinces as implementing guidelines for community development. It is expected that the lessons learned and recommendations from the report will be applied in the community development plan.
* At least ten CBOs/CSOs working on such issues as environment, governance, development, justice, youth and women in the southern border provinces will be provided with grants for working on the issues of environment, governance, development, youth and women.
1. Enhancing awareness and understanding of media in promoting social cohesion
* The seven pieces of investigative reporting were published for the public to understand the root cause of core conflicts in the southern border provinces by investigating and analyzing information from various “insider” sources.
* 37 female and male students from Pondok schools were equipped with basic journalism knowledge and community participation skills to communicate accurate information to communities, reflect socioeconomic or conflict issues in their communities and work towards resolutions.
1. Improving income generation and employment opportunities of communities
* 65 low-income women from seven local entrepreneur groups in Pattani increase the quality of their local products and the groups’ capacity in their marketing strategy, resulting in improved livelihood and self-sustainability.
* Two learning centres have been established with the facilitation of District Public Health Office in order to share and transfer knowledge on product and market development.
1. Enhancing legal awareness and capacity to access to effective dispute resolution mechanism
* 1,443 women and 2,022 men representing legal aid organizations, religious organizations and communities in 250 sub-districts in 33 districts in the three southern border provinces were trained on legal awareness and access to justice through the outreach and public information on legal awareness for communities to increase access to effective dispute resolution mechanism.
1. Strengthening capacity of local government in participatory planning and budgeting;
* Three practical recommendation packages are in place for mainstreaming conflict prevention/resolution and building social cohesion in local governance by means of strengthening the capacity of local authorities in the three southern border provinces in initiating and engaging in participatory planning and budgeting processes and strengthening citizen participation in development planning and resource allocation at the sub-national level.
1. Strengthening local level natural resource and natural disaster management;
* Local people in seven natural disaster-prone locations in the three southern border provinces are able to anticipatorily monitor natural disaster through the automatic weather stations in 2012.
* Seven pilot communities will have community disaster preparedness and response plans in place.
1. Increasing knowledge of and exposure to a range of governance models and practices;
* At least six various forms of conflict analysis tools are in place through a series of peace dialogues and decision making process of government agencies, CBOs/CSOs. Academic institutes and other stakeholders.
1. Strengthen capacities of government officials at the provincial level to provide effective dispute resolution mechanisms.
* 180 potential young people and community leaders were equipped with knowledge in civil rights in peace building, human rights in Islamic perspective and transition in government mechanism. The young people trained will return to their communities to transfer the knowledge to other young people and to expand peace building networks through people’s forums and local peace dialogues to be formulated in 2013.

***Key achievements per intended outputs***

**Output 1: Strengthened institutional capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) and media in promoting social cohesion**

Based on the mapping exercise of CBOs/CSOs working in southern border provinces and capacity assessments of selected organizations undertaken in 2011, several activities, including community development planning and preparation for provision of grants to communities, have been implemented to strengthen institute capacity of community-based organizations and civil society organizations.

Under this output, the STEP Project also focuses on improving the quality of journalistic coverage on the three southern border provinces, especially in terms of independence and professionalism of the media through alternative media. The project has been working closely with Deep South Watch (DSW) under the Center for the Study of Conflict and Cultural Diversity (CSCD) to support “Southern Border Journalist School” and “media for peace”.

***Activity 1.1: Mapping community-based organizations (CBOs) working in the south on existing community projects***

The project in cooperation with the Association of Southern Political Science and Public Administration (South PSPA) conducted the mapping of community-based organizations and civil society organizations in Songkhla and Satun to complete the study of the interrelated roles and responsibilities of CBOs and CSOs in conflict resolutions in the five southern border provinces and to identify potential community groups to enhance their capacities and opportunities in promoting development and social cohesion in the area.

The study aimed at investigating the status, roles and activity movements of CBOs/CSOs that are active in pushing forward development activities in Songkhla and Satun provinces. Data collection was carried out through documentary research, participatory observation, joining community activity groups and networks, focused group and in-depth interview.

The mapping categorizes 1,428 CBOs/CSOs in Songkhla and Satun into 8 groups based on the natures of the work performed by each organization: 1) business/ community/ career, 2) culture/ local wisdom, 3) community welfare, 4) environment/ natural resources/inhabitation, 5) financial organization group, 6) cooperation network group, 7) family support group, and 8) media group. It was found that the activities of CBOs and CSOs in Songkhla and Satun are mutually related in all levels: community level, network level, organizational network level, provincial issue-based network level, and regional and national strategy level; and that the organization empowerment process required 1) co-operation at every level to continually carry out activities, 2) established administrative structure, 3) participation in carrying out activities, 4) networks that are connected at area, provincial and national levels.

The study suggests that the general public should be informed of all the movements made by CBOs/CSOs in order to generate their understanding, which in turn can result in their participation in public and development activities. It is advisable that more academic activities for social benefits be held as they can lead to additional guidelines for sustainable community development. Thus, the three main findings of the study were: 1) the process of providing people with informed knowledge helped them aware of the need and process of solving community problems, 2) people with informed knowledge were able to carry out community management in accordance with the need of the community members, and 3) sustainable development and people’s participation in development activities at every level could lead to cooperation and harmony in solving the social crisis and natural resource problems in the South of Thailand.

Similar to those in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, CBOs and CSOs in Songkhla and Satun have the potential to take part in empowering communities and be an important driving force to bring up issues to provincial authorities and communities. The project strategically combined the findings of CBOs/CSOs mapping and the outcomes of field missions in the five southern border provinces to identify potential CBOs/CSOs working in relation to community development, livelihood, environment and justice to enable them to mainstream conflict resolution and social cohesion in their work through capacity building.

In addition to this, seven selective CBOs/CSOs working on environment in the southern border provinces were invited to participate in a study visit to Mae Hong Son to learn about a community participation project under the theme “Renewable Energy Facilities and Environmental Management Innovations in Advancing Ecotourism in Underserved Areas of Mae Hong Son” on 11 and 12 December 2012. This study visit equipped the participants from the southern border provinces with community-based innovations and enabled them to design and replicate such innovations in their area.

***Activity 1.2: Undertaking capacity assessments and gender analysis of CBOs/village committees in the south***

The project in coordination with the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) completed the assessment of capacities of the existing SBPAC’s Peace Community Development Project with five field assessment visits to villages/households in the five border provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, Songkhla and Satun to identify five model villages that have proven to excel in the areas of local sustainable economy, community saving schemes, public participation, community planning, budget allocation, and empowering of women and local knowledge. These villages will be a showcase of good practices for other villages. The capacity assessment met its objectives that aimed at: 1) following up on and evaluating achievements, strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the Peace Community Development Project; 2) identifying model villages for sharing of good practices; and 3) providing policy recommendations for community improvement and promotion. The 150-page assessment report prepared by SBPAC was published and distributed to 44 districts in the five border provinces as implementing guidelines for the Peace Community Development Project. It is expected that the lessons learned and recommendations in the report will be applied in the community development plan.

***Activity 1.3: Undertaking substantive and operational training for CBOs, local graduate volunteers and village committees on local community development projects***

Based on the findings of the mapping of CBOs and CSOs and the capacity assessment of SBPAC’s Peace Community Development Project, field visits to communities in the southern border provinces were made to identify potential CBOs and CSOs through interview and needs assessment. The STEP Project moved forward to seek participation of these groups to work together on local community development and social cohesion.

The one-day training workshop to strengthen capacities of potential CBOs/CSOs working in relation to community development, livelihood, environment and justice in the southern border provinces was organized in Pattani on 4 December 2012. The objective of the workshop was to equip the participants with the knowledge on social cohesion and human security in order for them to integrate and mainstream the concepts into their work to promote peace and development in the region. 57 participants from 22 organizations from the five border provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla and Satun actively attended the workshop and exchanged their views on strengthens and weaknesses in their work. The workshop was designed in such a way that while the session on social cohesion would equip the participants with skills to apply the peace perspective in their work; the SWOT analysis, divided by their natures/scopes of work, would enable them to integrate their roles and responsibilities in community development and participation in the southern border provinces. CBOs/CSOs were urged to integrate and mainstream social cohesion in their work and submit proposal to the STEP Project.

***Activity 1.4: Disbursing grants to CBOs and village committees working on issues of development, legal justice, development, youth and women***

The Council for Peace hosted by the Youth of the Association of Southern Political Science and Public Administration was completed, as youth groups from seven universities in the southern border provinces took turns to create a common space for sharing information and expression of opinions through public forums and dialogues. These dialogues and issues of concern have been documented.

The STEP Project explores the possibility in disbursing grants to a wider range of CBOs and village committees. The Local Peace Council, established in 350 pilot sub-districts in the five southern border provinces, is one example. The aim of the Local Peace Council is to prevent and resolve conflicts and create peace/justice in the community. The council also serves as a participatory forum for people to work together and solve common problems in the community. Members of the council consist of sub-district chief, religious leaders, community leaders and people in the community.

The Local Peace Council at Bangoysinae Sub-district (population: 8,000), Yaha District of Yala was selected for this field visit to learn how the council works and to explore the possibility of providing grant assistance. The Local Peace Council at Bangoysinae is unique in such a way that the local people agreed on using “social contract” (or in Yawi “Ukompakat”) with 10 local rules as a mechanism for local law enforcement. The council supports the community on livelihoods, environment and education, and needs further development on employment opportunity and OTOP products.

Grants to strengthen institute capacity of potential CBOs/CSOs will be provided to selected CBOs/CSOs in early 2013 and activities will be implemented throughout 2013.

***Activity 1.5: Supporting database system for monitoring women situation and training curriculum on gender assessment and sensitivity for CBOs in the south***

The eight-year violence in the southern border provinces has affected a wide range of women in the area. The STEP Project team continues to collect and maintain information on women groups and to attend activities for women in the southern border provinces. On 28 March 2012, 35 participants from at least 10 women CSOs attended the “Roadmap to Peace in the Southern Border Provinces”. The event was supported by World Bank and UN Women with the aim to brainstorm and draw action plans for women development activities in the southern border provinces to correspond with the Women’s Development Plan in the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) of the National Economic Social Development Board (NESDB), Office of the Prime Minister.

The discussions can be summarized as follows:

1. Amidst the violence, women in the southern border provinces should form strong alliance in striving towards the roadmap to peace.
2. Women should use media as a tool to voice out their needs and potentials
3. The action plans for women development should be aligned with the Women’s Development Plan in the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016).
4. Empowerment of women through women participation in local administration should be encouraged.

Apart from supporting and monitoring the existing database on the situation of women in the southern border provinces, the project has looked into gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in the project’s output 4: strengthened capacity of local administration in participatory planning and budgeting on women participation in the local administration, looking at the participation of women in local administration.

***Activity 1.6: Mapping of media initiatives***

The STEP Project supported the Second *Southern Border Alternative Media Day: Bargaining Power – Civil Networking and Synergy Media* organized at the Faculty of Communication Sciences of PSU Pattani Campus, on 12 and 13 March 2012. The event was developed in coordination between CSOs working on media and those working towards conflict resolutions in the southern border provinces of Thailand. It was intended for 400 people from government agencies, academic institutes, CSOs/CBOs and media networks attending the Alternative Media Day to use this common space in sharing knowledge and experience especially on how to apply media in monitoring dispute situation and transition of conflicts and in bargaining power with all parties that use violence as a mean to handle conflicts in southern border provinces.

The STEP Project was able to use this space in presenting and sharing its alternative media research findings completed in 2011:

1. Online media in the five southern border provinces
2. Folk/local media as the alternative media for the development of southern society
3. Peace radio for conflict resolutions in the five southern border provinces
4. Local cable televisions in the five southern border provinces
5. News coverage on women in the five southern border provinces
6. Media and peace building in the five southern border provinces

***Activity 1.7: Capacity development plan for constructive media / media for peace***

The project continues to apply alternative media to promote peace in conflict-affected areas. The “Media Expert for Southern Border Provinces” produced seven pieces of investigative reports ranging from history of the southern border provinces to fighting for Merdeka (independence), and from recruiting insurgents to resolving conflicts. These special reports intend for readers to understand the root cause of core conflicts in the southern border provinces by investigating and analyzing information from various “insider” sources. The seven pieces of investigative reporting were posted on the Deep South Watch website in November and December 2012 with positive feedbacks. The complete investigative reporting coverage will be published and disseminated to media networks, CBOs/CSOs and local authorities during the Third *Southern Border Alternative Media Day: Fields of Southern Peace – Communication Networks of Civil Society* organized to be held in Yala on 12 and 13 March 2013.

***Activity 1.8: Training provided for media working in and on the south***

Providing accurate, balanced information can promote peace by changing public perceptions. The STEP Project is using alternative media as a means of promoting peace in conflict-affected areas through “Southern Border Young Journalism School”. In cooperation with Deep South Watch under the Centre for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD) at Prince of Songkhla University and Pondok Schools, the project selected 20 female and male students, aged 15-18 to undergo 10-day intensive training camps. Rather than focus exclusively on violence and conflict, the training presented news on socioeconomic issues. The training was conducted twice in April 2012 for a period of 10 days per workshop.

The young journalism school intends to equip young people with basic journalism knowledge and skills so that they can communicate accurate information to communities and at the same time reflect socioeconomic or conflict issues in their communities and work towards resolutions. The activity encourages young people to involve participation of local communities and trust building process during their field/community work to obtain socioeconomic issues for news articles. Although human rights and conflict resolutions aspects are rather sensitive, the activity manages to educate the young people on these aspects through sessions and resource people. The gender aspect can be seen through the participation of both male and female students in the training, and through the empowerment of Muslim women in media.

The training content covers 1) basic journalism skills; 2) field/community work to obtain news articles; and 3) how to strategically produce news articles in Yawi. The training focuses on presenting news on socioeconomic issues rather than solely on conflicts and violence. At the end of the training, the students were able to produce news articles in Yawi reflecting socioeconomic issues for their communities. These news articles were subsequently published in local newsletters distributed within the communities and on Deep South Watch Network website. Upon returning to schools, it is expected that the knowledge and skills gained during the training can be shared with peers and teachers.

In the last quarter of 2012, 17 young Muslim students (12 female and 5 male) in the three southern border provinces were trained by the Southern Border Journalist School. The training workshops focused on basic journalism knowledge and how to communicate accurate information to communities to reflect socioeconomic or conflict issues in their communities. Their first bi-lingual community newsletter (Sinaran) with three selected community issues published and distributed to 200 people in communities in December 2012.

**Output 2: Improved income generation and employment opportunities of communities**

Based on the research findings on *structure of community economy, existing facilities and market needs, and market accessibility and product development for selected groups* completed in 2011, technical assistance and advice on products and market development and product adaptation was provided to low-income women in Pattani to support sustainable livelihoods throughout 2012. In addition to this, the project intends to develop guidelines for various stakeholders to further improve community economy in order to better meet the needs of the local communities/markets and to help improve employment opportunities.

***Activity 2.1: Assessing vocational training needs, existing facilities and market needs***

Completed with submission of the research paper in 2011.

***Activity 2.2: Planning and engaging stakeholders for local economy linked to market needs***

The project has recruited the Community Economy Expert from the Faculty of Economics, Prince of Songkla University, from October 2012 to May 2013, to 1) develop implementation plans and guidelines on community economy to various stakeholders in the three southern border provinces based on the research and assessment on *structure of community economy, existing facilities and market needs, and market accessibility and product development for selected groups* in 2011; and 2) to engage stakeholders in the activities linked to community economy and ensure that the needs of local people are addressed. In this reporting period, the expert completed multiple case-study approach review and analysis of existing capacities of community economy based on research findings and existing structure/stakeholders at provincial and local levels in the three southern border province. The focus-group discussions and interviews of key informants at the regional and local government levels for strategic and implementation planning on community economy and market access were conducted in Pattani and Yala in December 2012, with the plan for Narathiwat in January/February 2013. The guidelines/tools to promote community economy for various stakeholders will be pretested and completed by May 2013.

***Activity 2.3: Assessing marketing and product assessment***

Completed with submission of the research paper in 2011.

***Activity 2.4: Providing technical assistance and advice to communities on product and market development, product adaption, processing and marketing***

The project continued to equip 65 low-income Muslim women from seven local entrepreneur groups in Pattani with skills in basic marketing and product development, to standardize community products through the Recovery Community Business Activity. The activity completed in March 2012 with the report summarizing strengths, weaknesses and recommendations to further improve the quality of their local products/packaging and their market access. In June 2012, the project conducted a monitoring visit through focus group discussions and interviews with the seven woman groups to assess and identify three out of the seven products that have the potential to become successful “One Tumbon One Product (OTOP)” merchandises. From the monitoring visit, it can be summarized that the product sale of some groups has increased up to 30 per cent due to the product and market development strategy applied, and the expansion of market to other provinces.

The project then saw the need to continue supporting this activity throughout 2012 to ensure practicality in technical assistance to communities and sustainability of the products developed by these groups; and to achieve the following outcomes:

1. A Muslim women network in community business in Pattani is developed with good practices to be shared to other groups.
2. Products and packaging are of high standard and are acceptable by consumers.
3. New market access for community business is developed.
4. Muslim women groups are equipped with skills in writing business plans and market expansion.
5. Participation of government sectors, academic institutes and communities in community business development.
6. Local entrepreneur groups are equipped with knowledge in community business and use the knowledge to create sustainable incomes.

In August, the project facilitated three local Muslim woman groups to attend the haral food (products that are allowed under Islamic dietary guidelines) training workshop organized by the Haral Standard Institute of Thailand and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Office (SBPAC) to obtain haral certification authority for their products. The project continued to support local woman entrepreneur groups in pilot communities to improve products/packages, standardize community products and expand market access. During the last quarter of 2012, five community workshops to equip local woman entrepreneur groups with knowledge on development of business plans, products exhibitions, and market access and communication strategies were organized.

***Activity 2.5: Providing grants to women career development groups***

In addition to this, the project provided grants through Yaring District Health Center in Pattani to facilitate and obtain good manufacturing practices (GMP) from the Ministry of Public Health for these woman groups to standardize community products and increase market access in order to improve their livelihoods and create sustainable incomes.

**Output 3: Enhanced legal awareness of local communities and strengthen capacity of legal aid organizations to facilitate on local access to effective legal services**

Completing the community legal awareness activity implemented by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), the STEP Project worked in cooperation with the College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, on increasing legal awareness and empowerment of local communities. The activity aims to increase effectiveness on legal services, mediation and dispute resolution methods; to provide information regarding restrictions on citizen's rights; to reduce the occurrence of disputes or perceived discrimination that are based on misunderstandings of rights and legislations; and to equip paralegals and volunteers with knowledge and skills on basic legal aid. The College of Islamic Studies completed the following process in 2012:

1. Conduct mapping of legal aids and legal empowerment structures at the provincial and local levels;
2. Provide a strategic plan for establishing proactive legal aid structures where needed based on mapping;
3. Assess capacity of Adilan Centre and existing legal aid organizations/mechanisms in the southern border provinces;
4. Develop outreach and public information strategy and implementation plans for legal awareness; and
5. Develop a training manual for paralegals.

There is a need to continue the activities and move on to the next phase so that the research/assessment findings, the public information strategy and the training manual will be transferred into action to empower legal mechanisms to benefit local communities in the southern border provinces. The STEP Project will implement six activities under this output in 2013:

1. Training of paralegals for Adilan Centre
2. A series of training manuals on specific laws
3. Bi-lingual IEC materials promoting legal awareness (community radio, online media and short films)
4. Guideline/handbook on Islamic and Thai laws for southern border provinces
5. Induction course on legal awareness for government officials, combining Islamic and Thai law

***Activity 3.1: Mapping legal aid structure and legal empowerment at local level***

The mapping of legal aid organizations and the strategic plan for establishing proactive legal aid structure were completed in April and June 2012 respectively. The mapping identifies the legal mechanisms in three southern border provinces, specifying the roles and linkages between legal aid organizations.

The legal aid organizations are divided into two main categories:

Government:

1. Court of Justice
2. Provincial Attorney Office
3. Provincial Justice Office/Community Justice Network under Ministry of Justice
4. Damrongtham Center under Ministry of Interior
5. Provincial Human Rights Sub-committee under national Human Right Committee
6. Adilan Centre under Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center

Private Sector:

1. Provincial Attorney Council
2. Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) Foundation
3. Young Muslim Foundation
4. Cross Cultural Foundation
5. Provincial Islamic Committee
6. Justice for Peace Foundation
7. Alternative Justice (Hilal Ahmud)
8. Promoting Human Rights and Access to Justice Network (Hak Asasi Prikemanusian - HAP)
9. Authority Verify Organization

Recommendations were made for legal aid organizations from both government and private sectors to strengthen coordination in service deliveries to avoid duplications of work, to proactively provide legal assistance, and to use the Islamic social norms as a mean of mediation.

The strategic plan for establishing proactive legal aid structure was subsequently developed based on the mapping of legal aid organizations in the three southern border provinces through focus groups discussions and SWOT analysis of various stakeholders working on legal services and assistance. The following proactive strategies with clear strategic inputs and implementation plans were drafted and submitted:

Strategy 1: Integration of roles and responsibilities of legal aid organizations

Strategy 2: Creating effective legal aid structure and network

Strategy 3: Enhancing capacity of legal aid organizations

Strategy 4: Developing potential and capacity of paralegals and legal volunteers

Strategy 5: Improving access to justice mechanisms

***Activity 3.2: Organizing outreach and public information strategy for legal awareness developed and implemented in partnership with Adilan Centre***

Following the workshops to strengthen networks of “Community Justice” and participation of people in communities on legal awareness and access to justice in 2011, SBPAC from April to June 2012 conducted outreach and public information on legal awareness for communities in 250 sub-districts in 33 districts in the three southern border provinces, targeting 2,022 men and 1,443 women representing legal aid organizations, religious organizations and communities.

The outreach and public information on legal awareness for communities focused on the work of Adilan Centre, which is a legal service centre under SBPAC accessible by people in local communities locating in over 326 sub-districts and serves as a place for community participation in different dimensions and a public forum for conflict resolutions and social cohesion. The outreach and public information was conducted at the district level with representation from sub-districts and communities through series of public forum to publicize the roles and responsibilities of Adilan Centre and its services.

The College of Islamic Studies worked in parallel process on the outreach and public information strategy and implementation plans for legal awareness, focusing on overall legal aid structure in southern border province. The final report on enhancing legal awareness and legal aid for local communities in the three southern border provinces, combining three legal components: 1) mapping of legal aids and legal empowerment structures at the provincial and local levels; 2) strategic plan for establishing proactive legal aid structures at provincial and community levels; and 3) outreach and public information strategy and implementation plans for legal awareness, was submitted in November 2012. 250 copies of which were published and disseminated as guidelines/recommendations to SBPAC, government agencies and legal aid organizations in the southern border provinces.

***Activity 3.3: Strengthening capacities of paralegals, community leaders and legal aid organizations through training and tools for accessing information***

The College of Islamic Studies developed a training manual for paralegals to equip them with knowledge and skills on basic legal aid and special security laws. The training module was reviewed by those working for legal aid organizations such as Adilan Centre, Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) Foundation Promoting Human Rights and Access to Justice Network (Hak Asasi Prikemanusian - HAP); and finalized by the committee from the College of Islamic Studies. The training module for paralegals was pretested on 1 and 2 December 2012, targeting 50 law students from Prince of Songkla University. A series of training modules on specific legal issues will also be developed as needed and trained throughout 2013.

***Activity 3.4: Strengthening Adilan Centre and its networks by disseminating information and messages for legal awareness***

In the first quarter of 2012, the Directory of Adilan Centre, consisting of the list of contacts of Adilan Centre in 326 sub-districts and its local legal networks, was published and disseminated by SBPAC at the sub-district level in the five southern border provinces together with Implementation guidelines, brochures and posters on legal awareness and services.

The College of Islamic Studies completed the capacity assessment of Adilan Centre and existing legal aid organizations/mechanisms in the southern border provinces. The assessment investigated the following missions of Adilan Centre: 1) resolve conflicts in communities through mediation; 2) provide legal consultation and assistance; 3) enhance social cohesion and bridge the gap between the state and the people; 4) prevent an solve the problems relating to drugs and crimes; 5) empower public participation in solving community problems; 6) receive civil rights complaints; 7) organize public/community forums; and 8) act as a learning centre and a channel for access to justice.

Using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) approach to evaluate the capacity and efficiency of Adilan Centre, the assessment findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Context: The mandates and missions of Adilan Centre are proven to be very suitable for the southern border context; however, public awareness on the existence of Adilan Centre is rather low as the centre is made known to the public mostly by community leaders and volunteers.
2. Input: Although members of Adilan Centre are appointed locally, the centre does not have sufficient budget to run and there is no permanent office, resulting in lack of coordination within the centre or with other legal aid organizations or communities.
3. Process: Despite self-evaluating system, the centre lacks management knowledge and delegation of tasks and has no performance records. Therefore, the staff members are often reluctant to perform their roles and participation in the centre.
4. Product: The centre has faced many problems of budget, management and staffing; however, local people find the centre and its existence useful. In order to ensure the centre’s effectiveness and sustainability, government agencies should provide financial supports to the centre.

It is recommended that the tasks of Adilan Centre should be integrated and coordinated with those of other legal aid organizations (both GO and non-GO) in the southern border provinces. The capacity of staff members should be enhanced and the roles should be clearly delegated to effectively fulfill the needs of local people. Outreach and strategic plans should be drawn in order to reach target groups. The centre should involve and increase active public participation in the justice process.

The recommendations will be shared with responsible parties and submitted to the Secretary-General of SBPAC in 2013 to be used as a guideline to improve the capacity of Adilan Centre in carrying out its mandate in enhancing legal awareness and legal aid for local communities. Activities in 2013 under this component will be to better strengthen the capacity of Adilan Centre and further build general community legal awareness through paralegals, volunteers and community leaders to provide information to members of their communities on legal rights and other services.

**Output 4: Strengthened capacity of local administration in participatory planning and budgeting**

Three short-term local government administration consultants completed their work in assisting the Department of Local Administration (DLA), Ministry of Interior, and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) to design institutional and administrative packages that help to promote social cohesion in the areas focusing on (i) political and institutional structures; (ii) governance; and (iii) planning and budgeting. DLA will select innovative packages to develop local development plan and implement activities relating to social cohesion in the southern border provinces in 2013.

In addition to this, six sub-district administrative officers in the three southern border provinces were invited to participate in a study visit to Mae Hong Son to learn about the participatory process in local planning and budgeting on 11 and 12 December 2012. The training manual on Local Government Administration in Participatory Planning and Budgeting for local government administration officers was developed by King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI) under the UN Joint Programme on Integrated Highland Livelihood Development in Mae Hong Son.

***Activity 4.1: Partnership with Department of Local Administration to improve local planning framework***

This is an ongoing process with regular meetings and consultations.The STEP Project will present the practical recommendation packages to the Department of Local Administration (DLA) in early 2013 in order for DLA to select suitable packages to be piloted and implemented in the southern border provinces to strengthen local participation and social cohesion in the area. The Letter of Exchange will be signed between DLA and UNDP for further cooperation.

***Activity 4.2: Selecting targeted local authorities to assessing existing capacities in development planning and administration***

In partnership with the Department of Local Administration to improve local planning framework, the project selected 16 targeted local administrative offices (3 provincial offices, 6 municipalities and 7 sub-district administrative offices) in the three southern border provinces based on functions, sizes and conflict zones. A stakeholder analysis and an assessment of existing capacities of the local development plan at the local level were completed, using the following methodologies:

1. Multi-stakeholder inception workshop to determine an individual role and the direction of the Local Government Administration Team, organized on 3 April 2012 with approximately 30 participants from government agencies and CSOs.
2. Situational analysis, policy dialogues/advocacy, and interviews of key informants at the national, regional, and local government levels (February through March 2012)
3. Focus-group meetings, and a multiple case-study approach review and analysis of existing capacities and framework for local planning and local administration process in line with the procedural rules and regulations of the Ministry of Interior.

***Activity 4.3: Developing methodologies for people’s participation for social cohesion***

The three “Local Government Administration Experts” completed and submitted practical recommendation packages in mainstreaming conflict prevention/resolution and building social cohesion in local governance by means of strengthening the capacity of local authorities in the three southern border provinces in initiating and engaging in participatory planning and budgeting processes and strengthening citizen participation in development planning and resource allocation at the sub-national level.

Recommendations from the three research papers can be summarized as follows:

1. The first package is to apply asymmetric decentralization based on national identities, religions, cultures and norms of the southern border provinces, and to reform local government administration structures with spectrum of options. The minimal reform is to remain the existing two-tier systems (provincial office and municipality/sub-district administrative office), but rearrange minor structures and increase roles of lower-tire authorities to cover the areas of education, public health, natural and environmental management, art and culture, religions and local norms. It is suggested that sub-district administrative offices be abolished and and merged into municipalities in order to strengthen the capacities of lower-tire authorities, and that local development plans be applied as a provincial plan. The radical reform is to abolish existing structures of provincial administrative offices, municipalities and sub-district administrative offices, and establish special local government administrations. It is also suggested that lower-tire authorities set up advisory councils to serve multi-dimensional challenges.
2. The second package is to integrate the roles and responsibilities and the flow of information between upper and lower tiers of local government administration in order to enhance local participation and to better serve the needs of local communities through multi-level participatory budgeting system. It is suggested that the provincial/local authority establishes a pyramid structure of civic participations as well as a channel for thematic participations to enhance participation of local people from the street-level participation (communities, villages and sub-districts) through the district/provincial-level participation. It is suggested that comprehensive and up-to-date information relating to socioeconomic, population, health, education, incomes and vocations be gathered at the household level, analyzed from the street-level and transferred to the provincial level, in order to draw cascading citizens’ needs and severity of problems/issues at communities, sub-districts, municipalities, provinces and regions.
3. The third package focuses on applying democratic accountability in local government administration and explores the roles and responsibilities of women in local administration.

**Output 5: Strengthened local level natural resources and natural disaster management**

The STEP Project has raised a number of environmental issues relating to the management of the Pattani River and surrounding areas as well as the coastal areas through the research on integrated prevention mechanisms of floods in Ban Pakaharung in Muang District of Pattani. The two main approaches are to encourage involvement of people in natural disaster management; and to conduct geographic studies and research.

Completing the activity in supporting networking processes in selected communities, the STEP Project has shifted from conducting research to finding initiatives to resolve natural resource and natural disaster management issues, and building capacity of government agencies and communities on disaster risk management/reduction.

***Activity 5.1: Supporting networking process in selected communities and developing initiatives to resolve natural resource and natural disaster management issues***

Completed with submission of the research paper.

***Activity 5.2: Developing models and providing small grants to integrate environmental protection/disaster prevention with conflict management***

The STEP Project signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Friends in Need (of “PA”) Volunteers Foundation to create the model for participatory monitoring, natural disaster warning and the database for disaster preparedness in the three southern border provinces. The Foundation is to set up seven automatic weather stations (AWS), the flash flood monitoring and warning system, in three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand; and to ensure that the automatic weather stations will be managed and maintained by local community people with the support of sub-district administrative offices. A team from the Faculty of Science and Technology, PSU Pattani Campus, and the Pattani Bay (PB) Watch, led by Dr Somporn Chuai-aree, has been responsible for providing training to local communities on monitoring and warning system and for developing participatory disasters preparedness and response plans at the community level.

People living along Pattani Bay in the three southern border provinces are affected by common natural disasters such as flash floods indiscriminately. While the automatic weather stations in seven risk-prone areas will minimize any possible loss of human lives and assets, the STEP Project intends to use the management of natural disasters as a tool for conflict management, social cohesion and self-sustainability. This activity focuses on the participation of people in local communities in disaster prevention and response working toward self-sustaining process, serves as a forum for common space to create dialogues on natural disasters rather than political dialogues which are rather sensitive for local communities. The community training will incorporate other factors such as natural resources management, religious (both Muslim and Buddhist) way of life, belief and local wisdom, dimensions of conflict prevention and social cohesion.

During the reporting period, the project managed to train community leaders and local people on natural resources and natural disaster management to become natural disaster management volunteers and to establish a local natural disaster management network in the three southern border provinces. The 184 volunteers (44 women and 140 men) are from both Muslim and Buddhist communities in 24 villages, 19 sub-districts and 9 districts of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. The volunteers will be assigned to automatic weather stations in their areas in 2013. The project experienced the delay in setting up the seven automatic weather stations (AWS) in the three southern border provinces by the Friends in Need (of “PA”) Volunteers Foundation due to increasing violence in the selected sites which makes it difficult for the technical teams to access. It is expected that the technical work will be completed by March 2013.

**Output 6: Increased knowledge of and exposure to various governance models and practices among key government officials**

Eight years of violence have made the conflict in the southern border provinces a protracted one with endless loss. Confirmed by empirical studies, the root cause of the conflict lies in ethnicity, history and religion resulting in physical, structural and cultural violence for decades. Suppression and deprivation of Malay identity by the state’s apparatus, not complying with local culture and practices, have led to the ‘legitimacy deficit’ of the governance, the local feelings of being treated unjustly, and consequently, vicious violence committed by conflict parties. The solution to this prolonged conflict is to address the root cause by plainly exploring alternative governance arrangements, safeguarding justice, while sustaining peace dialogue, which is the main component of this output.

***Activity 6.1: Commissioning study of governance models***

Completed with submission of the research paper.

***Activity 6.2: Supporting series of discussions on governance models and decentralization***

Completing the research on Government Models in Southern Border Provinces through Citizens Jury Process, the STEP Project continued to explore innovative ideas from various and multi-level peace dialogues. Three Conflict Analysis Workshops were conducted during this reporting period. Narratives of Conflict (19 to 20 March), Assessment of Peace Efforts (10 to 12 June) and Roadmap for Peace (12-13 October) were the fourth, fifth and sixth in the series of Conflict Analysis Workshops, led by Asst Prof Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Director of CSCD and Deep South Watch, and Dr Norbert Ropers, Director of Berghof Foundation for Peace Support gGmbH. The Conflict Analysis Workshop intends to bring together 25-30 local people (Muslims and Buddhists), religious leaders, government officials, and representatives from civil society and peace institutes to analyze conflicts in the three southern border provinces based on the following steps:

1. To build knowledge on conflict analysis and peace dialogues based on global conflict situations
2. To integrate global conflict analysis methodologies into the situations of the three southern border provinces
3. To create a common document to be used as a guideline conflict resolution partners

Three Conflict Analysis workshops were organized in 2011 as follows:

* Conflict Analysis Workshop I: Mapping of conflict resolution partners (18-19 September 2011)
* Conflict Analysis Workshop II: Exploring sources of conflicts (16-17 October 2011)
* Conflicts Analysis Workshop III: Conflict drivers and dynamics (11-12 December 2011)

The fourth workshop, Narratives of Conflict, encouraged the participants to use collective memories based on identity, cultural background, ethnicity and religion, to create a timeline that maps out how the conflict has emerged. This enabled them to understand root causes of the conflict from different perspectives.

The fifth workshop focused on the context analysis based on the model of Sri Lanka with various driving forces for both conflicts and peace building. Twenty-five participants representing governments, CSOs, religious organizations and local communities gathered for peace dialogues. Their discussions were mainly on the roles of Organizations of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in initiating peace process and the decentralization process for conflict resolutions, and the negative driving forces that are in the way of the peace process such as national security policy, unstable politics, unreliable justice system and Islamophobia.

The sixth workshop – Roadmap for Peace, the last of the series to be supported by the STEP Project, focused on the issues and challenges of the interim process and the transformation processes in a constructive way through negative and positive peace. Negative peaceis the absence of direct violence (physical, verbal, and psychological) between individuals, groups, and governments. The concept of negative peace addresses immediate symptoms, the conditions of war, and the use and effects of force and weapons. Positive peace is more than the absence of violence; it is the presence of social justice through equal opportunity, a fair distribution of power and resources, equal protection and impartial enforcement of law.

The project solely supported six Conflict Analysis Workshops from September 2011 through October 2012, paving the way for the Insider Peace-building Platform (IPP) – a multi-donor action research aiming to support the development of an inclusive insider peace-building platform in the three southern border provinces with a parallel systematic assessment and reflection process driven by a group of scholar-practitioners.

The STEP Project signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Center for the Study of Conflict and Cultural Diversity (CSCD) to partially implement the Insider Peace-building Platform (IPP) for the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand in September. This action research aims to support the development of an inclusive insider peace-building platform for the southern border provinces of Thailand with a parallel systematic assessment and reflection process driven by a group of scholar-practitioners who are participants themselves in the emerging IPP. This is seen as a social scientific method which is particularly useful for the accomplishment of social change and organizational learning processes. The implementation period for this activity is from 1 September 2012 to 31 May 2013.

In 2012, the project supported CSCD to conduct a series of interviews and small group meetings in Pattani and Bangkok with IPP participants to reflect on the assessment of conflict analysis workshops, and to make plans for the development of a comprehensive Roadmap for Peace. Two 2-day workshops to simulate peace negotiation approaches (Peace Writ Large and Peace Writ Little) for the conflict in the three southern border provinces, supported by the Embassy of Finland, were organized in December 2012. Introduced by CDA Collaborative Learning Project, Peace Writ Large aims for conflict transformation and prevention with 2-state solutions; whereas, Peace Writ Small requires a step-by-step peace building process involving various stakeholders. The next step for 2013 is to develop training of trainers guidelines for potential government officials, CBOs and CSOs based on the IPP process, and to publish the IPP action-research as a policy brief.

**Output 7: Enhanced knowledge and capacities of government officials at the provincial level to provide effective dispute resolution mechanism**

This component focuses on designing conflict prevention/resolution mechanisms and tools for training of government officials and communities the three southern border provinces of Thailand. This component is inter-related with others components of the project with the ultimate aim to finally create social cohesion and to reduce conflicts and disputes in southern border provinces.

***Activity 7.1: Training provided to government officials and communities for dispute resolution structures in mediation, knowledge of relevant laws***

In parallel with output 6, the STEP Project supported People’s College to train potential young people and community leaders (Track 3 of the Peace Building Strategy Framework: local grassroots/mainstream society) on conflict management and peace building process to create “Leaders in transferring conflict to peace” in order for them to transfer the knowledge to other young people and to expand peace building networks.

The process is planned as follows:

***Leaders in transferring conflict to peace***

The training provided to young people and community leaders will be an ongoing process to continue to create potential young people and community leaders in building peace networks in communities.

***People’s Forums***

Pilot communities will be selected for organizing public forums on dispute management and citizen rights, facilitated by those participating in the training courses: Leaders in transferring conflict to peace.

***Peace Dialogues***

This is to replicate the models and tools used in the Conflict Analysis Workshop under output 6 and transfer the knowledge down to the community level.

***Peace Newsletters***

The lessons learned from the above three activities will be combined and produced into bi-lingual newsletters (Thai and Yawi) to be distributed people in communities to ensure that the peace process has been shared and publicized.

In 2012, four 3-day training workshops were organized in May, June and December 2012 to equip 180 young people and community leaders with the knowledge of civil rights in peace building, human rights in Islamic perspective and transition in government mechanism. The young people trained will return to their communities to transfer the knowledge to other young people and to expand peace building networks through people’s forums and peace dialogues to be formulated in 2013. The lessons learned from the above three activities will be combined and produced into bi-lingual newsletters (Thai and Yawi) to be distributed people in communities to ensure that the peace process has been shared and publicized.

People’s College is a group of 23 young human rights volunteers working to create a community network for peace in conflict affected areas.

***Activity 7.2: Induction course for government staff posted to the south and working in the field***

The STEP Project supported the Institute for Peace Studies of PSU and the Association of Southern Political Science and Public Administration (South PSPA) in organizing the International Conference on Political Science, Public Administration and Peace Studies on 6 and 7 September 2012. This is the first of a series of initiatives to encourage related research and training in social sciences and political science, especially in the area of civil society, politics and development in ASEAN countries. The sub-themes of this conference included:

1. Peace and Conflict Management
2. Public Empowerment and Participation
3. Political History, Conflicts and Peace Process
4. Civil Politics
5. Culture and Development
6. Public Management

Keynote speeches were given by former prime ministers of Thailand and Malaysia HE Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva and HE Dr Mahathir Mohammad respectively. Academic figures such as Prof Dr Duncan McCargo, University of Leeds, UK, and Prof Dr Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, Thailand, also participated in the conference. Over 300 participants from government sectors, academic institutes, CSOs/CBOs, non-government organizations, media and education sectors attended the conference. The STEP Project was able to publicize its work on government models through the session on “IPP in context of PPP: Insider Peace-building Platform in the Context of Pa(t)tani Peace Process”. The concept of the session was to open and expand a common dialogue space for “insiders” to collaboratively analyze the conflict and concretely propose a distinct Roadmap for Peace. The session was led by Asst Prof Dr Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Director of Deep South Watch (DSW) and Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD), and moderated by Dr Norbert Ropers, Director of Berghof Foundation for Peace Support gGmbH.

In addition to this, 32 research papers relating to politics, peace and development in ASEAN countries were presented and the findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Political leaders’ goals should always be peace and prosperity;
2. Challenges to building an ASEAN community are directly related to developing and institutionalizing democratic processes that uphold human rights, promote global cooperation and sustain peace;
3. Understanding conflicts and development in ASEAN countries is critical to developing the ASEAN community; and
4. Alternative approaches are needed for resolving conflicts in the southern border provinces of Thailand.

The overall tone of the conference was an endorsement of peaceful strategies as critical to achieving sustainable resolution of political and territorial conflicts. These strategies include, above all, open dialogue and inclusive negotiation that will achieve productive relationship building, collaboration, and a willingness to work together for success.

Specific steps toward this goal include

* building institutional mechanisms for non-violent, civil, and inclusive discussions, negotiations, and solution building;
* educating conflicting groups on changes in strategies arising from today’s globalized politics;
* recognizing, analyzing, and resolving *root causes* of conflict;
* balancing power and empowerment of stakeholders in areas of protracted conflict; and
* building trust among both affected groups and power players in conflicts.

Mediation, or international court and soft power may be necessary to facilitate conflict resolutions, and parties in conflict must come to understand the need to develop patience and tolerance toward diversity and differences, whether voluntarily or through intervention of external agencies or countries. Peaceful approaches do not solve problems overnight, and they can only succeed if political leaders’ *shared goals and values* are, above all, peace and prosperity and the well-being of the citizens of the people living in the countries in conflict. The ASEAN community will not be possible without these shared aims.

Following these strategies, under this component the STEP Project will work with the Institute for Peace Studies, the Centre for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity and the College of Islamic Studies in building institutional mechanisms for non-violent, civil, and inclusive discussions, negotiations, and solution building through designing and offering induction courses to enhance social cohesion and dispute resolution for government officials in 2013. An international consultant will be recruited to design conflict prevention/resolution mechanisms and tools.

1. **SITUATION IN SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES**

From the database collected by Deep South Watch, there are 12,497 incidents and 13,988 casualties (4,964 fatalities and 9,024 injuries) from southern violence between January 2004 and December 2012. During the reporting period, there are 810 incidents with over 1,835 casualties (484 fatalities and 1,351 injuries).

Incidents 2012 that may have an impact on the situation in the three southern border provinces are as follows:

* The cabinet approved the Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development 2012-2014, initiated by the National Security Council, in February 2012. The policy is divided into two parts, comprising both security and development strategies. It states that the Internal Security Operations Command must adjust its plans and operations in line with this policy. The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center will be instructed to follow the three-year policy in working out its strategies. All relevant agencies will also apply this policy to its operations in a systematic manner. While the Policy aims to eliminate all negative conditions that might be used by perpetrators as a pretext to initiate acts of violence, it seeks to deal effectively with southern unrest through peaceful means, decentralization of administrative power, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. It calls on all members of society to join hands in handling the southern situation and all relevant agencies to work on southern problems in an integrated manner. The Government will create a favorable atmosphere for the settlement of the southern conflicts through non-violence. All sectors of society will be provided with better understanding of the situation and will be encouraged to participate in the peace-building process.
* The Emergency Decree on Government Administration in States of Emergency B.E. 2548 (2005) in the southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat has been enforced for seven years, since 20 July 2005. The enforcement of the Emergency Decree has been extended 30 times (every three months), the latest of which was made on 19 June 2012. A claim has been made by the authority that imposing the Emergency Decree is necessary as a measure to prevent and address emergency situations and to restore order, peace and safety of the public. According to the Cross Cultural Foundation (CrCF) and the Muslim Attorney Centre Foundation (MAC), legal aid has been provided to people affected by the abuse of special security laws including the 1914 Martial Law Act and the Emergency Decree. One of the reasons is that several special laws have been enforced in the southern border provinces concurrently including the 1914 Martial Law Act and Criminal Procedure Code, which is normally applicable to any criminal offence. As a result, a person can be vulnerable to being held in custody by at least three different laws and for the duration of up to 121 days prior to having their cases filed with the court. The duration of custody is unnecessarily long and improperly infringes on rights and liberties of a person’s physicality.

Various civil society organizations working on human rights have called for the review of the extension of the enforcement of Emergency Decree in the Southern Border Provinces, based on the following reasons:

1. The enforcement of the Emergency Decree should be conducted strictly to serve the purpose of the law.
2. A criterion for the extension of Emergency Decree should be in line with the principle of proportionality.
3. Provisions in the Emergency Decree authorize the Prime Minister to declare an emergency situation. Such authorization flouts a fundamental principle of a democracy and the rule of law whereby the division of power and safeguards of people’s rights and liberties is upheld.

Below are concerns from the general public on the special security laws:

1. These laws provide for exceptional and discretionary arrest and detention powers to State officials, especially the military, which may allow the state authority to wield these powers without adequate oversight by the judiciary or other independent bodies.
2. The application of these laws may fail to meet the strict tests of legality, necessity and proportionality.
3. It is seen that the imposition of special security laws in Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala has failed to contribute to building peace and security in those areas, due to the increase of incidents and casualties from July 2012.

* Following the OIC meeting in June last year, H.E. Mr. Sayed Kassem El-Masry representing the OIC secretary-general, met representatives of Thai security agencies and the governors of five affected southern provinces at the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) in Yala during his visit to southern border provinces in May 2012. He viewed that use of violence and force cannot solve the problems but peaceful approaches and building understanding and respect will lead to real peace and that the world Muslim body condemned persons who attacked innocent people, an action which he said is against Islamic principles.
* The cabinet appointed Lt-Gen Paradon Patthanathabut as the deputy secretary-general of National Security Council replacing Somkiat Boonchu on 26 June 2012. Some concerns have been raised over the direction of the government’s policy to resolve violence in the southern border provinces, especially on the continuation of the policy on the peace dialogues with all parties initiated by the former deputy secretary-general of National Security Council.
* The Assembly for Southern Border Provinces Reform in cooperation with CSOs in the southern border provinces has come up with six model options of “Pattani Mahanakorn” to enable the three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat plus four districts of Sonkhla (Jana, Sabayoi, Thepa and Natawee) to have a special autonomy to govern themselves. 107 out of 200 public forums were organized in 2012. It will be concluded by April 2013.
* The Islamic holy month of Ramadan (20 July to 18 August), was marked by more violence in the southern border provinces of Thailand. Since Ramadan began on July 20, almost 100 incidents were reported in the areas. Insurgents recently stepped up attacks on civilians, causing widespread fear in both the Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslim populations. In response to this, the government in September approved the disbursement of more than 391 million baht (13 million US$) from the central budget for "emergency use" to reinforce military operations in the insurgency-plagued provinces. The money will fund the military operations of the Internal Security Operations Command. The government has spent more than 180 billion baht (6 billion US$) battling the insurgency since the violence returned to the southern border region in 2004. Some recent insurgent attacks were designed primarily to spread terror among the population. Many Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims started to close their businesses and stopping work every week on Friday, the Muslim day of prayer, after insurgent groups issued an order to do so in September.
* 93 suspected insurgents surrendered to authorities on 11 September, calming they wanted to stop fighting. The surrendered insurgents are mainly members of the Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate (BRN-C) including Wae-ali Copter Waji, who allegedly led an attack on an army base in 2004 in which weapons were stolen and four soldiers were killed. A US$32,000 reward had been offered for his arrest. Fourth Army Region Commander assured that those insurgents who committed crimes will be prosecuted, while others will be rehabilitated and allowed to return to peaceful lives with their families. So far, only three of the 93 suspected insurgents have been charged under the Criminal Procedure Code and will be prosecuted. The rest were charged with violating the Emergency Decree on Government Administration in States of Emergency B.E. 2548 (2005). The rising incidents in September, including the car bomb in Saiburi district of Pattani killing six people, are believed to have been the result of the surrender.
* The attacks on educational personnel and civilians including children in the last three months of 2012 caused widespread of fear in both the Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslim populations. Six school teachers were killed in this reporting period, raising the number of educational personnel fatality to 157 since 2004. The latest incidents resulted in temporarily suspension of classes in 1,200 schools in the three southern border provinces. The Secretary-General of SBPAC has planned to respond to the violence against educational personnel by recruiting those with bachelor’s degrees or special expertise from local communities to be teachers to prevent fear of being attacked. He believes that people from local communities will keep an eye out for one another. UNICEF urged an immediate halt to violence against children in Thailand’s restive southern provinces. The UNICEF Representative in Thailand called upon all parties involved to use every means at their disposal to end the violence and ensure that all children are protected. More than 50 children under the age of 15 have been killed and some 340 injured in Thailand’s southern border provinces since the resurgence of violence in January 2004, according to Deep South Watch. During the visit of the Prime Minister to Pattani on 13 December 2013, she affirmed that children need to have a safe place to learn and that there is a need to ensure teachers’ security by increasing reinforcements.
* Thailand and Malaysia have reaffirmed their close relations and cooperation, despite attempts to cause misunderstanding among them by perpetrators of unrest in the southern border provinces.

# IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The seven outputs of STEP Project have been designed and implemented to achieve social cohesion and prevent further escalation of the conflict situation in the region. Since its establishment in 2010, the project has contributed to the promotion of social cohesion in the southern border provinces through developing capacity of government agencies, local authorities and communities, improving livelihoods of vulnerable groups, creating common spaces for peace dialogues among various actors, increasing access to effective dispute resolution mechanism, and providing input on various government models suitable for the southern border provinces.

The degree of the violence in 2012 was high and the impact was widespread. Insurgent groups continued to target security officers and teachers in government-run schools despite tireless interventions from the Thai Government to restore peace and order. However, amongst the turmoil, attempts find conflict resolutions in the southern border provinces could be actively seen from the work of civil society and peace institutes through preparation of peace dialogues and public forums. The project so far has provided the opportunity for a large number of stakeholders, both government and non-government, to come together with the aim to find common solutions and to address a wide range of challenges in the five southern border provinces. Various and multi-peace dialogues and public forums conducted have prepared stakeholders (Track 2 and Track 3) on peace process and have paved the way and created safety nets for peace negotiations at higher levels (Track 1).

Apart from its contribution towards the peace process, the project empowered communities and public participation in promotion of social cohesion. Pilot activities and lessons learned from improved income generation, participatory planning and budgeting in local administration, and community participation in natural resource and natural disaster management activities can be shared and transferred in the southern border provinces and other areas. Strengthening capacities of duty bearers, legal aid organizations and paralegals to provide dispute resolution mechanisms enables local community people to have access to justice system and to understand their civil rights.

The STEP Project throughout 2013 will continue to strengthen institutional capacity of CBOs/CSOs through grants; improve livelihood and self-sustainability of vulnerable population; increase access of local people to effective legal services and justice system; apply an integrated practical recommendation package in mainstreaming conflict prevention/resolution and building social cohesion in local governance; engage local people in natural resources and environmental management through community participatory approach; create common and public spaces for peace dialogues and policy recommendations; and provide training for government officials and community leaders to enhance social cohesion and conflict resolutions. The project will focus more on documenting good practices and innovative methodologies to be shared and applied at the national level and/or submitted for policy recommendations.

The challenges remain in accessing high-risk areas where people with high vulnerability are, complying with laws and regulations relating to national security and UN security, changing in leadership of provincial/local authorities, and rising impact of violent incidents without clear motives and claiming of responsible parties. Project risk logs need to be reviewed and updated frequently.

# DISBURSEMENT AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

From 1 January to 31 December 2012, **USD 577,554.54** (83.66 per cent) out of the total annual budget (2012) of **USD 690,353** was disbursedas per outputs as follows:

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| **Output** | **Funding source** | **Amount (USD$)** |
| 1. Strengthened capacity of CBOs | TRAC 3 | 79,984.51 |
| JPN | 13,213.22 |
| 2. Improved income and employment | TRAC 3 | 46,934.70 |
| 3. Legal awareness of local communities | TRAC 3 | 58,956.73 |
| JPN | 12,314.10 |
| 4. Strengthened capacity of local government | TRAC 3 | 24,283.90 |
| JPN | 88,352.41 |
| 5. Natural disaster management | TRAC 3 | 65,653.28 |
| 6. Knowledge on government models | TRAC 3 | 10,389.62 |
| JPN | 46,511.68 |
| 7. Provide effective dispute resolution mechanism | TRAC 3 | 46,718.73 |
| 8. M&E | TRAC 3 | 38,407.26 |
| JPN | 45,834.40 |

**ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

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| APR | Annual Project Report |
| AWP | Annual Work Plan |
| BCPR | Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery |
| CPAPCSCD | Country Programme Action PlanCentre for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization  |
| GMS | General Management Service |
| HAIHAP | Human Achievement IndexHak Asasi Prikemanusian  |
| IPS | Institute for Peace Studies |
| ISOC | Internal Security Operations Command  |
| ISS | Implementation Support Service |
| LEP | Legal Empowerment Project |
| LOAMAC | Letter of AgreementMuslim Attorney Center Foundation |
| MDGMoI | Millennium Development GoalsMinistry of Interior |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice |
| NEX | National Execution  |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NHDR | National Human Development Report |
| NRC | National Reconciliation Commission |
| PEG | Project Executive Group |
| PSU | Prince of Songkla University |
| RCB | Regional Centre in Bangkok  |
| ROAR | Results-Oriented Annual Report  |
| RTG | The Royal Thai Government  |
| SBPAC | Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre |
| STEP | Southern Thailand Empowerment and Participation Project |
| TAO | Tambon Administrative Organization |
| ToRTPBS | Term of ReferenceThai Public Broadcasting Service  |
| TPR | Tripartite Review |
| UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNPAF | United Nations Partnership Framework |