

**TRAINING  
ON  
MONITORING  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
VIOLATIONS  
AND  
COURTS / TRIALS**

***Summary Report***

15 – 18 August, 2009, Pattani  
Organized by

Asian Institute for Human Rights  
8/25/2009

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Foundation (CrCF)



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# Summary Report

## Introduction

In response to concern expressed by human rights activists and lawyers that the judicial system in Thailand was not able to effectively protect the rights of vulnerable groups, AIHR initiated a pilot program called ‘Court Watch’ in 2008. The program, supported by Open Society Institute, sought to monitor the functioning of courts in Thailand by training local observers to conduct trial observations. The program also sought to strengthen the capacity of civil society activists to engage with the judicial system for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups. Review of the Court Watch Program in 2008 revealed that in addition to strengthening understanding of activists on ‘principles of fair trial’, there was also a need to enhance their skills on fact finding and documentation. In line with these objectives, the training on ‘Monitoring Human Rights Violations and Courts /Trials’ was organized in collaboration with Cross Cultural Foundation in Pattani, Deep South of Thailand from 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> August 2009. Mr. D.J. Ravindran, human rights activist and Advisory Board member of AIHR conducted the training.

## Objectives

- To clarify importance of collecting credible information
- To discuss elements of identifying sources
- To examine basics of evidence collection and how to assess them
- To practice how to conduct interviews with victims and witnesses
- To clarify basics of court monitoring for human rights fact finding
- To discuss recording information and preparation of standard formats
- To clarify elements of human rights reporting and examine steps involved in organizing fact finding missions.

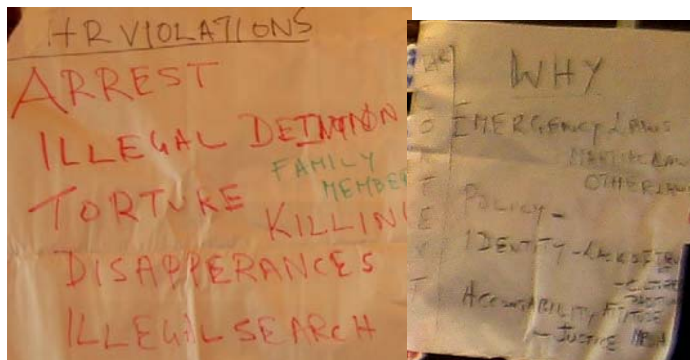
## Participants

The training workshop was attended by 30 participants drawn from different organizations and groups working in the Deep South of Thailand, such as, Muslim Attorney Center, Working Group on Justice for Peace, Young Muslims Association of Thailand, Promoting Justice and Human Rights and

Students Federation in Deep South. 7 young lawyers, activists and researchers from Bangkok and Northern Thailand also joined the training.

## Content

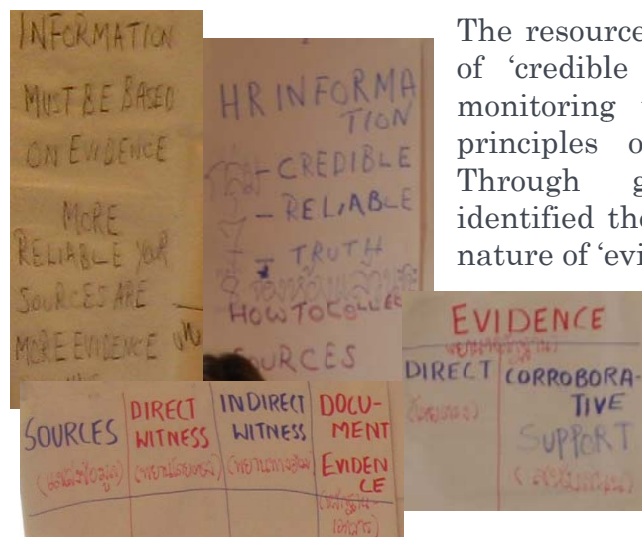
### *Building the context*



The workshop began with participants sharing information about cases of human rights violations that they had either experienced or witnessed in the Deep South. The cases described by them involved issues of killings, disappearances, illegal

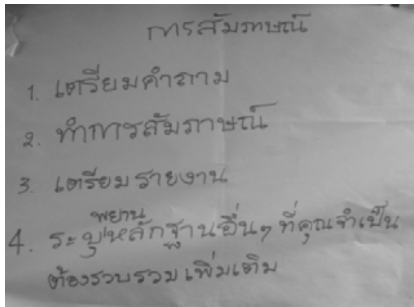
detentions and searches, arrests, torture, harassment and intimidation of families of suspected persons and sexual harassment. They further identified the causes of such violations and thus helped to lay down the context in which human rights violations were occurring in the south of Thailand. The causes identified by them included arbitrary emergency laws, central government's policies for dealing with the conflict, lack of accountability and justice, biased reporting by media, lack of respect for the distinct identity of the people of Deep South and lack of trust between the people and the authorities.

### *Importance of human rights information – sources and evidence*



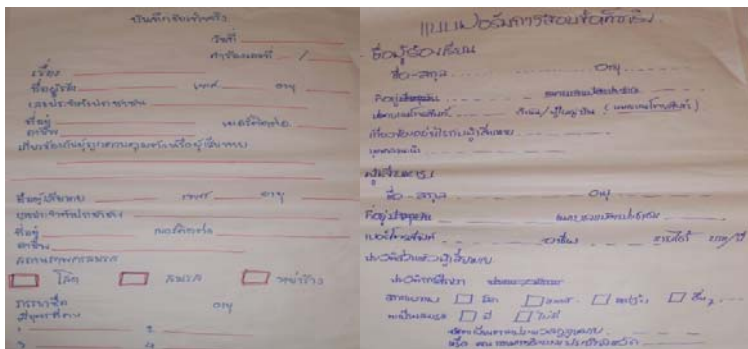
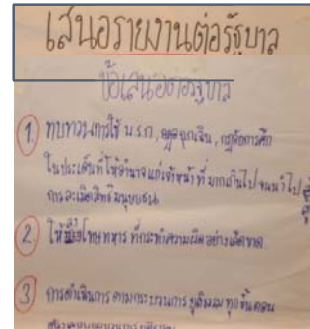
The resource person stressed the importance of 'credible information' in human rights monitoring work and discussed the basic principles of collecting such information. Through group exercises participants identified the sources of information and the nature of 'evidence' that should be gathered to build up a case of human rights violation.

## Interviewing, report writing and recording in standard format



Victims and families of victims had been invited for this session. In order to strengthen their skills, the participants in 8 groups interviewed victims or families of victims of human rights violations. The different groups presented their interview reports to the plenary for comments and discussion.

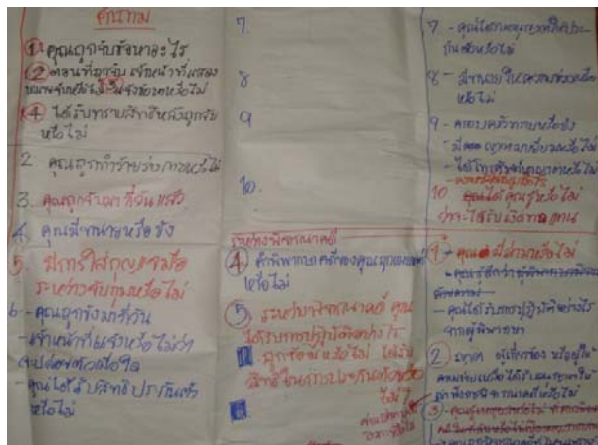
After the session on interviewing, the participants wrote a structured report based on their findings from the interview. The participants were provided some basic ideas and format for writing human rights reports.



The resource person discussed the importance of recording information and presented a standard format for doing so. The participants worked in groups to prepare formats that could be used by them.

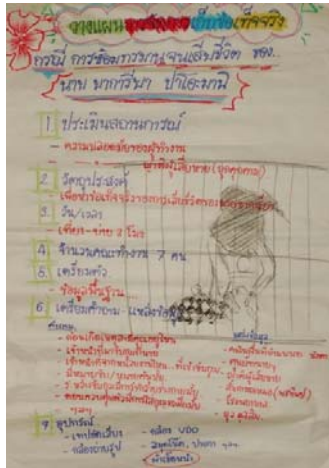
## Collecting information from courts

During this session, the resource person presented the basic standards or the principles governing fair trial – both rights during pre-trial and rights at trial. The participants were then encouraged to examine each principle and formulate questions that would enable them to collect information and assess whether the right was



being violated or not.

### ***Planning a fact-finding mission***



At the end, the participants worked in groups to prepare a plan for conducting a fact-finding mission. The participants were provided a framework for preparing their respective plans that included setting up objectives prior to conducting any fact – finding activity. The strengths and weakness of the plans were then discussed. The purpose of this session was to highlight the need and importance of proper planning before conducting a fact finding mission.

### **Follow-up**

The participants discussed and proposed follow-up activities that will be carried out by their respective organizations.

*Planning meeting:* It was decided to have another one day planning meeting to discuss how the participating groups could strategize for systematic collection of information, from courts and other sources. It was decided to have the planning meeting for participants from Bangkok by the end of August and for the southern groups after ‘ramadan’ or by first week of October.

*Production of handbooks:* It was also decided to produce two handbooks for easy reference by the participants. One handbook would cover the basics of fact-finding and documentation. The other handbook would cover the basic principles governing fair trial and the questions that one needs to ask in order to monitor these principles. The handbooks would be produced by the end of September 2009.



## Conclusion

The workshop has contributed to strengthening local groups in human rights monitoring and has created a group of committed individuals towards that end. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss court monitoring and strengthen the capacity of local groups to monitor courts. Human rights programs including the three – week human rights course conducted by AIHR in collaboration with CRCF paved the way for conducting this workshop for strengthening the capacity of local groups in monitoring human rights.

