

Abstract

The study on “Multi Disciplinary Professional’s Work to Protect Sexual Abused Girls: Feminist Perspective” is a qualitative study. The study was made through interview of multi disciplinary professional team in Ranong and Phang Nga. The team consists of health professional, legal professional and social professional. Related document on child protection was analysed. Group meetings with those professionals were organized to collect information. The study covered the period from April 2007-February 2008. The objective are to understand how the multi disciplinary professionals work as a team, to understand their way of thinking and see if they have knowledge on gender issues and whether they apply the knowledge on their work. The study was carried out using the perspective of radical feminism in order to offer recommendations to consider apply its perspective in their work so that the multi disciplinary team be able to analyse the underline causes of sexual abuse cases at individual and social level. The girls will therefore benefit more from preventative work. At present, the multi disciplinary team works separately. There is a lack of coordination to organize case conference in order to be able to make a proper response plan for the girls with in depth understanding of the root causes of power relation between gender in the family context and the social structure. The team are able to cover only 3 steps out of 5 in their work to provide protection to sexual abused girls. The 5 steps are fact finding, emergency response for immediate safety, rehabilitation, reintegration and develop preventative measures in the community.

The study was done by interviewing 10 members of multi disciplinary professionals in Ranong and Phang Nga. Their average age are 34.1. Most of them received Bachelor’s Degree, married with children and are government officials. The interviewees have different social status from the girls receiving their services who are usually from family in difficult situation. Fathers usually do odd jobs or are fisherman. Mothers are housewives. The interviewees therefore come to the conclusion that the child protection issues happen only in the poor community not at their level.

In Ranong, there were no case conference held to plan for appropriate and long term response for sexual abused girls. The work done in a non formal way, networking and requesting for suggestions or advice from each other. In Phang Nga, there were internal team meeting only at Phang Nga Hospital even though the Provincial Child Protection Committee appointed two multi disciplinary teams since October 2007. At the time of the study, no meeting was organized.

Main reasons that contribute to the inability of the multi-disciplinary team to work formally comes from both internal and external issues. The internal issues are the lack of understanding and support of staff of each agency. There was not enough personnel to carried out the work. The existing personnel were responsible for other tasks as well. The external issues include the reason that the responsible area of each province are quite remote which make it difficult for the multi disciplinary team to do follow up work. There was low case revealing since sexual abuse cases were considered private in the eyes of the community. There was no friendly reporting mechanism for girls.

Another important issue was the cooperation among different agencies with different main responsibilities and expectations which can delay the work.

The multi disciplinary team believed that their work was child-centered even though from the study it shows that they usually followed the need of the parents more than listening to the girls. Their work can lead to the violation of rights over their body.

For gender issues, all the interviewees heard about it and understood that it involves the call for equal opportunity in work rather than violence issues. They believe that men should act as head of the family and they should use their power to protect members of their family. Only two interviewees saw the inequality of power in the family and women and girl children are the men's "property".

The multi disciplinary team see that incest occurred because the father was ill or was in difficult situation, had high sexual need than normal and their wife cannot response to their need. They did realize that the father see their family members as their property. They believed that mothers rather protect the fathers than the girls. However

they all believed that the girls were not the cause of the abuse. The girls did not reveal the incidents out of fear. Their feeling after that was not angry but confused and fear. The girls felt that it was their fault to put their father in prison.

The overall picture of multi disciplinary team work to protect sexual abused girls still separate work in each agency. The abused cases were referred from one agency to the next. There was no coordination in organizing case conference to plan for long term response for girls. There was no analyze of the sexual violence in the home with gender and power relation issues. Therefore the response or protective measures were not conducted according to the root cause.

The recommendations coming up from this study are (a) multi disciplinary professionals should be educated with knowledge on gender-base violence so they will understand and be able to plan properly for the response and will listen more to the need of the girls and family; (b) there should be a child friendly reporting mechanism for sexual abused girls; (c) there should be more female police officers working with these cases; (d) there should be offices at national and provincial level to responsible for child protection issues; and (e) there should be child protection manual for multi disciplinary team for clear steps and guidelines in providing assistance and response to sexual abused girls.