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SEMINAR ON THE "IMPACT OF THE CHANGING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT ON PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMMING IN ASIA" SEOUL, KOREA, 1995

OUTLINE OF COUNTRY REPORT ON "PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING IN THAILAND"

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Public service Broadcasting in Thailand

1. Introduction: In the globalization era, cooperation in information and culture activities among people in the country is one of the major emphases. It has been recognized in all organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The situation on public service broadcasting in Thailand is now playing a vital role in the society for the result of better standard of living for the human resource of developing country.

Thailand is entering into the 8th stage of country's economic and social development which is six years plan of Thai government.

As a main public interest mass media, television, the most vivid form of broadcasting nowadays has an effect for the stock of impression and the effort to changing public behavior by mean of experience.

2. The Situation of Television Broadcasting and It's History in Thailand.

Thailand, a country of 60 million population, is one of the South East Asian countries that people has best opportunity for human right of original basis; "Right to Know." The information flows every minute within the country and via satellite from around the world. Thai people are able to have their own satellite dish to pick up programmes and receive information of the urgent situation immediately from many satellite
stations all over the world. This is the situation of the highest group of audience in the urban area, the rest of the audience, in urban and rural area will pick up their selected programmes by television from five free T.V. and three pay T.V.. Each free T.V. organizes an average of 13 hours of broadcasting time everyday, while pay T.V. runs 24 hour services each day.

The situation of programmes competition is in every T.V. service. According to my experience, the public service programme has less chance for competition due to many reasons; the characteristic of its programmes, culture of receiving media of audience, and financial constraint.

For the brief background information on T.V. broadcasting history, we can say that Thailand has started television broadcasting since 1955, some 40 years ago, which was the first T.V. broadcasting service in Asia continent except Japan. Thai Government had announced several laws and regulation for setting up a new T.V. station in the form of state enterprise under the Public Relations Department, Prime Minister Office. People were delighted and eager to buy a box of black and white entertainer for their home in the city. With the limitation on hardware equipment, 10 KW. black and white RCA transmitter, 525 system and a 96 metre self supported antenna was set up for the service area in Bangkok.
The main purposes of the government in those days are:

1. To develop the education for people in public health, politics, industry and in general learning.

2. To inform news and public interests.

3. To provide entertainment.

On January 22, 1952, 3 years before starting T.V. broadcasting, the Thai government announced the first Act of Radio and Television Broadcasting which stated that The Thai Television Company which was a State Enterprise of the government was the only organization that had full authority for T.V. receiver distribution and had to pay license fee for contribution of the programmes operation, just like the B.B.C. of U.K. and NHK of Japan.

This broadcasting rule had been changed in 1959, or 7 years later, The Thai Government announced free right to T.V. receiver distributors to all organizations and devoted licence fee to the public by cancelling licence fee to all T.V. set owners. This act had enchanted the public to the television broadcasting interests and enlarged the size of audience rapidly. But the effect of the law was the lower of the financial support for the programmes production, which made business support playing most significant role in terms of T.V. broadcasting to present.
4. Television Public Service Programmes in Thailand

As mentioned earlier, Thailand now has 5 free T.V. Networks, and 3 pay T.V. Networks. Each station has her own goal, mostly information and entertainment. But there is a government station set up in 1987, only 8 years ago, for the purpose of education and public affairs services, Television of Thailand Channel 11, T.V. Network of The Public Relations of Thailand, Prime Minister's office. The station which has full support from the government as the public service media.

Television of Thailand Channel 11 devotes 40 percent of its air time to the public service programmes.

The percentage of the proportion of programmes are:

- Education programmes = 30 %
- News and Current Affairs = 20 %
- Public Services programmes = 40 %
- Entertainment / Sports programmes = 10 %

The Public Services programmes that Television of Thailand Channel 11 broadcasts to the public are in various types; documentary,
magazine, talk show, tele-conference discussion, question and answer, cultural and traditional programmes including mini series spot filler.

Now there is another type of public service which is called live-on-spot broadcasting, and the emergency special programme for natural disaster.

In order to flow public interest content, the government will announce main projects and its action plans by all means through mass media. In 1995, there are nearly 20 of main projects, the policy planning and activities are the responsibility of the Office of The National Public Relations Commission or N.P.R.C. The chairman is a Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, the committee are high ranking officers who represent all main government bodies.

The N.P.R.C. office located in the Public Relations Department has 3 divisions.

- National Public Relations Policy and Planning.
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Public Relations for Development.

The Television of Thailand Channel 11 and the National public Relations Commission, therefore are two governmental organizations in the Public Relations Department that serve
public service policy. So there are no serious problems about the allocation of public service programmes broadcasting time, but there are various obstruction in programme standard because of the reluctant financial support when compared to those programmes that are supported by business side.

The situation of public service programmes in other T.V. stations is in fine position. The stations devote few percent of their air time for spots public service. The co-operation of the N.G.O. bodies in Thailand can help a lot in programme development, the donation of financial support from local and international organization bring a lot of change in programmes production, the good example here is to save the environment:, air pollution, water supply and so on, another example is AIDS and DRUG prevention for the public health.

One of the special programma which draw public interest is a magazine programmes co-produced by governmental and non governmental organizations to raise fund for natural disaster relief. On this occasion, most T.V. stations will devote their air time to broadcast for the public.
Recently, about 2 weeks ago, the Thai Government co-operated with 3 free T.V. stations and all pay T.V. stations in organizing a programme for raising fund for the homeless people in the North who suffered flooded situation. This 4 hour programme could raise fund as high as 172 million Bath or US $ 6.6 million.

5. Future Trend and Prospect for Public Service T.V. Programme.

Advanced technology is rapidly making time and distance irrelevant as it limits affecting communication by creating a wide variety of communication means. Public attention should be drawn to this challenge to existing values to the society.

The more channels of communications will make less opportunity for public service programme to reach the goal, unless the policy makers will put on strongly attempt and intergrated system would be able to handle the combined services more efficiently.