The conflict in the southernmost provinces of Thailand is characterized by contestation and resistance to acquire political power at sub-national level. The three characteristics are (1) conflict between the State and ethnic minority groups, a struggle between the former ruling class within the territory seeking to claim right to self-determination vis a vis the existing State structure, (2) conflict within the elitist echelon in the area whereby local leaders the majority of whom belong to the same ethnic group contest for dominance among their own ranks and (3) conflict of community/society in the form of tensions and violence among groups of different identity (ethnicity or faith), all happening at sub-national level. These three characteristics are interrelated. The vertical conflict between the State and ethnic minority group impacts the conflict within elitist class and the conflict of community/society. When the national leadership supports one particularly segment of local elite to assert political and economic dominance over other elitist group, or vice versa, the conflict within elitist ranks and conflict of community/society can in turn intensify the vertical conflict between State and ethnic groups, as armed elements under the command of local leaders or original leaders react to the State’s use of force to suppress them.
Facilitating Community Driven Development in Conflict-Affected Deep South

Dealing with consequences of State-sponsored development which is largely driven by national security imperative. As the State uses development as means to reinforce its apparatus within the conflict-affected area, development work has not yielded the most crucial outcome of improving people’s quality of life, empowering local community, and building trust between the local population and the State. In addition, this approach could generate yet another longer-term impact of shaping people’s attitude to become passive recipients anticipating external assistance. Some of the immediate consequences include the fact that communities have become more fractured due to competition for benefits accompanying the influx of development projects rushed into the localities, in the void of accountability mechanism and sustainability.

Threat to development workers’ safety. Given the ambiguity in the motive of violence perpetration and the unpredictability of attack and target, the general population and development workers operating in the area are extremely concerned about their own safety. They go about their daily activities constantly on edge and taking extra precaution. The Deep South Watch which maintains an incident data base counts 15,374 insurgency attacks between January 2004 to December 2015, killing 6,543 (averaging 545 per year) and injuring 11,919 people (averaging 993 per year). Data for 2015 alone show that out of those killed and injured, 49.8 per cent are Buddhists, 47.2 per cent Muslims and 3 per cent others. About 49 per cent of those attacked are classified as “soft target” whereas 51 per cent belong to the “strong target” category. The active insurgency sti/les development atmosphere. It also dampens general enthusiasm to participate in development-related activities as both development workers and village leaders alike feel unsafe, and consciously trying their best to stay within the safe sphere. For development workers having to do outreach work, they ought to adjust their travelling and active hours of on location, avoiding travel or remaining onsite after dark. In violence-prone spots, development workers would liaise closely with residents regarding their plans so the residents can look out for their safety ahead of entry into the site. At the same time, community leaders deliberately maintain a low profile to mitigate any personal safety threat, uncertain whether their active role and participation may antagonize individuals or interest groups. Insurgency has actually been exploited as a pretext to perpetrate many opportunistic attacks within the area.

Impacts of Insurgency on Development Work in the Area Include:

1. The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance The Case of Southern Thailand, Adam Burke, Pauline Tweedie and Ora-orn Poocharoen, pp.3-4.

Referencing:

1. The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance The Case of Southern Thailand, Adam Burke, Pauline Tweedie and Ora-orn Poocharoen, pp.3-4.
Lessons Learnt from Facilitators

Working in multi-cultural setting requires an extra level of caution and sensitivity. As conflict adds another layer of challenge to the multi-cultural setting challenge, carrying out development work in area of such nature has become even harder and more complicated. One must be extremely careful in ensuring that development work does not get added into the existing mix of distrust and resentment among different groups of residents and stakeholders. The Expanding Community Approaches in Conflict Situations in the Southernmost Provinces in Thailand (ECACS) aims to build confidence and trust among people within community, among different communities within the deep south, and between community and local government agency in this region, through Community Driven Development, CDD. The key principles of CDD are:

**Emphasis on participatory process.** In order to establish a sense of ownership, community members participate in every step of the way – from situation analysis, decision to choose a project through dialogue and as informed by evidence and knowledge, planning for implementation, project management, drawing lessons learnt and sustainability.

**Equality, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of development outcome.** To foster trust among community members, agencies and other stakeholder entities, support is given directly to the community and sub-district for the community to have full autonomy in managing the project of their choice.

**Building the capacity for civic responsibility, skill and collective learning** so that community members understand one another better, and generate collective work experience to carry on development tasks going forward.

**Partnership and synergy** with all other stakeholder entities working in the area. This Note draws upon findings from a research into the role and experience of Facilitators in implementing Community-Driven Development work in conflict-affected deep south under ECACS project. The study is intended to comprehend issues, identify challenges, and how Facilitators adapt and adjust, as well as identifying key determinants in how Facilitators play their role in such context. The aim is to find ways to enhance and support their ability to do development work that is most appropriate and effective in this setting. Facilitators play an instrumental role in view of the fact that CDD process requires participation, opening up opportunity for all to take part in the learning and implementing in order to strengthen the capacity of community leaders and empowering the community. But within the vulnerable setting of the southernmost provinces, the indigenous contexts socially and culturally are not conducive for a participatory approach. Obedience to their natural leadership, gender inequality and insurgency constitute factors inhibiting people’s participation. With safety as primary concern, everyone is wary of everyone else. This type of context requires an individual to play the role of an agent to stimulate participation, to foster mutual trust. And that individual must possess the quality of impartiality and competency to gain the acceptance of all sides. This study collects information from two sources: desk review of relevant documents and field work involving structured in-depth interview with key informants and questionnaire on the capacity and self-assessment of facilitators. The key informants consist of (1) a total of 16 ECACS facilitators deployed across the provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, both experienced and new facilitators, women and men, and (2) five individuals who play the role of supporting Facilitators’ work in ECACS sites and two veteran development workers from other development agencies.

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3 The Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situations in the Southernmost Provinces in Thailand (CACS) Phase 1 was implemented from 2009-2013, and Phase 2 (ECACS) from 2013-2017. “Experienced facilitators” in the study are those working with the project from Phase 1 until now. “New facilitators” are those coming on board in Phase 2.
Community-driven development work under CACS/ECACS has been impacted by the insurgency, in no different manner than other development undertakings as outlined above. We find that insurgency has no direct bearing upon the safety of individual Facilitators, nor significantly stalling progress of project activities. Rather, the ongoing insurgency has made participatory development more difficult to achieve. Facilitators have thus always been grappling with the challenge of working in an environment featuring a web of intersecting conflicts. In studying the lessons and experience of how Facilitators adapt in the face of these circumstances, we take into account two key factors influencing their work namely (1) conflict-affected context of the southernmost provinces and (2) internal factors within CACS/ECAS.

1. Area-specific contexts
are determinants pre-existing onsite that are beyond control and difficult to manage. Nonetheless they have implications on safety, trust, acceptance and efforts to encourage participation of community members. These determinants include the insurgency itself, conflict relating to local political interest, power, and a variety of vested interests, vulnerability of multi-cultural setting. These determinants give rise to the following issues.

1.1 Insurgency and work safety. Sites of CACS/ECACS are classified by the authority as “red zone,” prone to violence. Facilitators are thus compelled to work in at-risk territories. Development workers and activities in these territories fall inevitably into the scrutiny of both the State and groups that think differently from the State. Until now, no violent incident has happened to any Facilitator nor any village project directly. This could indicate that CDD approach has manifested itself to some extent insofar as its clear emphasis on inclusive community participation and generating tangible benefit to community members, as well as its impartiality – not siding with the State nor with any particular group or party. The work has not sent any negative impact, or resulting in those who think different from the State losing out on their mass support base.

How CDD Facilitators Prepare and Adapt
Facilitators have done the following: Conduct stakeholder mapping in order to understand the area, community leadership and relationship dynamics.

Make efforts to reduce the skepticism of and build trust among community members, by introducing themselves or locate a reference point in the form of someone from the community, or individual whom the community knows and trusts. Facilitators must maintain their impartiality, not to create an impression among villagers that they side with any particular party. They must communicate and dialogue with various groups onsite in particular religious leaders, Tadika teachers. Under no circumstance would Facilitators discuss insurgency issue in order not to make villagers nervous that they are in any way related to national security agency. Facilitators must provide clarity to community
members should they need to collect any information deemed to be sensitive issues in the eye of the people. At the same time, self-identification and agency they work for ease the wariness on parts of the security apparatus onsite. (For instance, letters from the Project to all agencies concerned at every level, carrying Facilitator’s ID badge while working in the field)

**Be very careful when traveling in and out of work site.**
Safety precaution habits include avoid risky routes, avoid establishing a fixed pattern or predictability of travel schedule, avoid visit or holding site activities on symbolically important dates relating to insurgency, constantly monitor situation from accessible and reliable sources, and regularly checking and evaluating situation with local residents. The important point is that Facilitators make efforts to establish good will with the local residents to cultivate familiarity and trust. Because Facilitators believe that villagers provide the best protection. In any case, earning the trust and acceptance of the villagers takes time and require concrete results from the work. Even though CACS/ECACS project and Facilitators have undertaken preparation and safety precaution, being from and having lived in the insurgency-affected area for a long time may at times create a false sense of overfamiliarity. Therefore, the ECACS project must prioritise safety issues, constantly driving it and internalizing it systematically.

1.2. **Conflict resulting from local political rivalry, power play and vested interests.**
Political conflict at community and locality level, along with conflict of interests stemming from the fact that certain leaders may have benefited from projects injected into the locality. These types of conflict impose the most palpable bearing upon CDD work, as they are the main factors undermining inter-community relations. Such political conflicts spawn factionalism, refusal to cooperate despite the cause of public good. In some instances where the Project organized activity, if members of one faction attend, the others would not attend. There have also been attempts to lobby Facilitators to support the work of one side, while seeking to exclude the other. In certain areas, Facilitators were compelled to change the Village Implementing Committee lineup, because certain personalities within VIC electioneered for a political party, and so risking rupturing the community trust and working relationship between the team and the rival party. Rivalry to stake ownership claim over the project in order to extend one’s own patronage to cronies is often related to factionalism of local political interest groups. These conflicts are endemic and only intensified since the resurgence of violence which triggered an influx of development projects overwhelming the area.

**Facilitators must be able to see through and keep up with these dynamics otherwise they would be scrutinised, or unknowingly drawn into being a part of the conflict, which could have serious repercussions.**

**How CDD Facilitators Prepare and Adapt**

Upon finding themselves in the situation where endemic conflict impacts project activities, Facilitators engage the following measures.

**Communicating information, update of work progress with all stakeholders onsite continually and at regular intervals,** to avoid being perceived as particularly close to one side or others, or neglecting those who did not participate. And where conflicts actually arose, they would refrain from expressing their opinion, or criticizing one side or others with other community members in order to exclude themselves from being part of the conflict.

**Analysing the conflict, factors at play, and understanding relationship dynamics among different groups of people to find entry point into resolving outstanding issues.** For instance, they might find a neutral party who is respected by both feuding sides to get them together for a dialogue or to involve in Project activities. Another option is to find a space or activity where the conflicting parties would normally do together naturally, and Facilitators would
use these as opportunities to engage, interact and share information for them to understand the Project work.

Right and appropriate timing to visit and follow up work onsite through regular situational analysis. Due to the perennial presence of factors that may ignite conflict, so as to avoid adding Project work into the mix of potential fuel for the conflict, Facilitators must consider choosing the right timing to enter. For example, during election season, Facilitators would not visit work site unless absolutely necessary, because the leaders and villagers were preoccupied and in no mood for non-election matters. Also they could easily be perceived as politically biased. In addition, when problems arise, they may not step in to intervene straight away but they would rather wait for the right timing to do so.

Even-handed allocation of role and responsibility for leaders and VIC members to play in an inclusive manner, aligned with their skill and interest. By opening up opportunity for all to be part of the VIC through consultation and joint decision making process. And by allocating appropriate role in line with each leader’s competency. This is not to make factional leaders feel that the Facilitators are not impartial, or resenting that greater role has been allocated to any particular faction.

Using religious faith as rallying point to solicit cooperation. Facilitators believe that at the end of the day, religion is the core value that everybody upholds in common. In the advent where a Facilitator was inevitably seen as being part of the conflict, one of the colleagues from other site, or the Project representative would be deployed as temporary substitute subject to constant evaluation of the situation.

1.3 Facilitating Community-Driven Development in Conflict-affected, Multi-cultural Setting Under the circumstances of insurgency in which ethnicity and faith have been used as pretexts to drive wedge between Buddhist and Muslim population, relationship tends to be fragile. Working in a multi-cultural setting can be sensitive and delicate – 11 out of 43 CDD sites are multi-cultural. Some are Buddhist-dominant communities whereas others are Muslim-dominant. All CDD Facilitators are Muslims. Challenges of working in multi-cultural setting include 1) not having development perceived as aggravating the already pervasive sense of inequality of opportunity and distribution of benefits to the minority groups living in the area, and 2) the role of Muslim Facilitators having to operate in Buddhist-dominant communities and in mixed Buddhist-Muslim communities. How do Facilitators learn and adapt in order to gain trust, acceptance and cooperation of the people? They have to be very adept and attuned to feel any slightest change in sentiments of both groups, given the pre-existing high level of suspicion. CDD Facilitators express concern of working in Buddhist communities and in mixed Buddhist-Muslim communities, due to their deficiency in understanding of the Buddhist thinking and way of life. But while working they have been trying their best to learn and adjust, to be accepted by the community. With regular interaction and engagement, they have grown to understand more about Buddhist way of life, as well as better understanding each other’s concerns and constraints, leading to mutual adaptation on both ends.

How Facilitators conduct themselves and the way they work are therefore crucial factors. This code of practice includes regular communication of information and engagement to demonstrate sincerity and build trust. Trying to engage all sides on board the work process, project activities, and making them part of the working group.

Story from the Field:
A conflict between the Chief Executive of Sub-District Administrative Organisation versus the Sub-District Headman in Sub-District A has an impact on the level of participation in ECACS project work. If supporters of one side takepart, the other camp would not. In the face of this, the Facilitator evaluated the extent of how serious the conflict was, identified the factors influencing it, and trying to identify a potential intermediary who holds sway equally on both sides. The Facilitator concluded that there is not a single individual within the entire sub-district with enough stature either side would heed. The extent of the conflict is beyond the Facilitator’s individual capacity to deal with, because extending invitation to both sides to come join the project activity failed. The Facilitator could only go so far as managing exigencies in the form of making sure both sides turned up only in key project activities. Finally, an individual outside the sub-district in question with influence over both conflicting parties stepped in to invite both sides to join in Project activity. As it turned out, both sides agreed to participate in the Project meetings.
Choosing a common space where everyone feels comfortable to step forth to participate and keeping in mind always inclusiveness of minority population.

1.4 Accessing vulnerable groups and those affected by the insurgency. Until now, CDD process under ECACS has been unable to reach out to engage certain vulnerable groups, or people affected by the insurgency in sub-districts where the project operates. The participatory nature of CDD process requires substantive and dedicated voluntary participation to be part of it. Yet for the vulnerable population groups, they are typically alienated from the community. Their living conditions are not conducive for stepping forth to participate. At the same time, data collection exercises, or visitation of those affected by the insurgency, especially for the so-called “ambiguous cases,” remain sensitive undertaking in the eye of the national security apparatus, or in the eye of those who think differently from the State. Or even from the point of view of the villagers themselves. Indirectly, Project activities related to community financing, for example savings groups or community shops have generated cash flow at the local level, and these have benefited the vulnerable marginalized segments within a community. (They stand to benefit from the 2.5% withholding for sagat and from various forms of dividend paid back to the community.) In sum, the ECACS project and Facilitators must comprehend and analyze conditions that form the contexts, in order to find ways to reduce obstacles to the work and to position themselves on the ground as appropriate to the sensitive contexts. Facilitators are able to help sorting out certain differences, whereas in other issues, they can only acknowledge and be neutral observer without making any effort to intervene because the conflict extent may be well beyond their capacity to deal with, and any effort to intervene may backfire.

2. Internal Factors within ECACS Project
Against the backdrop of conflict nexus, overcoming the challenge of applying Community Driven Development approach to achieve its objectives, developing internal competencies to operate effectively within this environment is important. Among the key factors are 1) Facilitators. Pertinent issues here include their competency, capacity, drive, gender, being Insider and being Buddhist or Muslim; and 2) project management factors consisting of work process and project support mechanism.

Internal Factors

Competency-capacity of Facilitators. Key qualifications of Facilitator in conflict-affected deep south include (1) skill in knowledge management to induce participation, active listening skill, being observant and inquisitive. (2) always alert to learning new things. (3) understanding the area and contexts of the conflict. (4) impartiality. (5) the ability to connect and communicate. Results of the study show that the majority of Facilitators have adequate level of knowledge and skill, but they still lack the expertise. Aspects that require capacity strengthening include facilitation skill, grasping the conflict context, conflict analysis and management, understanding the area, and the ability at community diagnosis, specialist knowledge on the substance of development projects at community and sub-district levels, and liaising with State agencies.

Drive. The majority of Facilitators are fresh graduates with relatively little experience in development work. Many of them are still searching for their life’s goal, therefore lacking in clarity of development perspective. Some new, inexperienced Facilitators upon facing problems or difficulties of work procedure or external factors beyond their control would feel disheartened, and their commitment to participatory approach wavered. Most importantly, their drive and commitment are contingent upon concrete results borne out at the community level, that will serve as proof and foster mutual confidence between the Facilitators and the communities they work with.

Gender. In conflict-affected, multicultural setting of the deep south, gender presents both opportunity and constraint to working as Facilitators. In the context of violence and local politics conflict, men are more at risk than women in terms of their safety. Because men are viewed as symbolizing violence, so they are subject to
distrust from both ends of the State and those who think differently from the State. Men could also be seen as more susceptible than women to political factionalism. In socio-cultural context of Muslims, women Facilitators face more constraint and likely to gain less acceptance than men, in relations to working with leaders, religious leaders or using religious principles to explain or support the work. Moreover, there is the issue of mobility, working hours and work space. Men Facilitators face less spatial constraint than their women colleagues, as they are able to access work sites at all time, and can make work-related appointment anywhere. Women Facilitators may come across constraints in access to work site, or holding meeting in the evenings. Being women, families and communities would express extra concern for their well beings should they have to travel late or stay late at work. Appointment spaces in mosque or tea shop pose barriers for women, because these spaces are culturally assigned as men's sphere, and women's entry is deemed inappropriate.

In any case, most gender-related constraints can be overcome, as long as Facilitators prove themselves through their performance, by positioning themselves well, showing impartiality and commitment to be accepted by all sides present in the field.

Being insider and being Buddhist-Muslim. The three southern border provinces are clearly multi-cultural. The Malay Muslims constitute the majority population group with distinct identity and using their own language as main means of communication. At the same time, insurgency and violence continue. The choice of Facilitators still has to be “Insiders” of the three southernmost provinces, because they have the fundamental understanding of the local context and can communicate in Malayu language. Amidst pervasive mistrust, being Insiders means they can access and gain the trust of fellow insiders more easily than outsiders could.

Overall, the level of skills among Facilitators varies, depending upon individuals' work experience and their own drive to improve themselves. Consequently, the level of ability to apply the knowledge from capacity development and application of actual work experience to strengthen their work also differs among individual Facilitators. Factors of being insider, Buddhist-Muslim, and gender consideration are influenced by the social context and insurgency. Therefore recruitment of Facilitators must take into account these two factors.
Lessons Learnt from Facilitators

**Project Management Factors**

ECACS has a project management system that supports the work of Facilitators to some extent but it still falls far short in the face of intense and fluid challenges of working amidst nexus of multiple conflicts. On the other hand, most Facilitators have little work experience. Thus the issues that must be prioritized include the workflow design that allows for flexibility, agility, and team work emphasis that involves learning on the job and instantaneous feedback loop for prompt improvement and adjustment in keeping with the dynamics of the area. It is equally important to have a system to support both technical aspects and the workflow – something along the line of a coaching system. Learning and sharing should take place among the Facilitators themselves, and learning from experience of their counterparts from other areas. Communications both internally and externally need to be regular, along with lending of moral boosters.

**Facilitators’ Need for Support**

Facilitators have identified their constraints and needs in the following areas: 1) **knowledge and competencies** in facilitation skill, reinforcement of CDD principles and compliance, community diagnosis, specialist knowledge in the development projects at community and sub-district levels, understanding of the State’s bureaucratic, institutional framework as pertinent to the development work and issues at the community and sub-district, and skills necessary to handle complex conflict such as understanding of conflict and conflict management, ability to evaluate situation and come up with appropriate response.

2. **Facilitators must adhere to the CDD principle and maintain impartiality at work.** On the basis of understanding the situation and community relations dynamics, Facilitators must constantly review where they stand and how they are perceived by local residents. They must give importance to identifying neutral space where the majority of community members feel comfortable participating, taking into account other ambient factors including physical conditions, multiculturalism, and political sensitivity of the locality, in order to ensure inclusiveness.

3. **Working in multi-cultural setting with pervasive distrust and sense of inequality,** Facilitators should make effort to understand the different culture, lifestyle and thinking of residents from different faith, so that they understand and conduct themselves appropriately. This will help to win the acceptance and establish bond with residents more easily. At the same time, they should give importance to opening up space for inclusive participation, while evenly distribute benefit to both Buddhists and Muslims. They should always check the sentiments of the people of every group and stripe. In case of doubts, they must try seeking instant clarification to prevent doubts spiraling into conflict.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Strengthening capacity in the area of knowledge and sharpening their skill as CDD Facilitators.** This should be done continually and regularly, for skills like facilitation, community diagnosis, specialist knowledge as applied to development projects at community and sub-district levels, understanding of the State’s bureaucratic, institutional framework as pertinent to the development work and issues at the community and sub-district, and skills necessary to handle complex conflict such as understanding of conflict and conflict management, ability to evaluate situation and come up with appropriate response.

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4. Improving the work process and method of Facilitators. This can be achieved through regular review of goals and CDD process with Facilitators every once in a while, and equipping them with tools to help them understand the local dynamics, relationship dynamics, power structure, and endemic conflict. Facilitators should be regularly prompted to apply these tools for instance conducting stakeholder analysis in community/sub-district where they work, develop team work arrangement at sub-district and provincial levels, and at the ECACS project-wide level. In addition, there should be a support mechanism for coaching that is consistent, and linked with networking and opportunities to learn and share within and beyond the southern border region. These could take the form of academic networking, issue-based networking and area-based networking. Workshops should be held as a matter of course to draw lessons learnt in order to generate knowledge and learning while enhancing the adaptability of the work to address constantly evolving challenges of sensitive context. Strengthen coordination between work site and State agencies in a concrete manner. The emphasis is on the linkage and synergy, and opening up channels to work with government agencies concerned at local, district and provincial levels in order to generate experience of coordinating between community and State agency to bring about concrete development outcomes. Using communications to access different groups at agencies of every level regularly in order to foster understanding, reducing distrust and forging synergy. Moreover, there should be rotation of Facilitators who stay working in the same site over a long stretch of time, to avoid inclination towards partiality.

5. Getting ready and prepared for Facilitators’ safety at work. The Project should institute a system to assess the situation prior to and during Facilitators’ work onsite to mitigate risk and dealing with emergency that may arise. These should include comprehension of conflict context, situation assessment and joint analysis of violent incidents between experts and Project staff. There should be basic safety training and dealing with emergency that may arise while at work in the field. Project activities should be communicated and signaled to all sides so as to avoid being under scrutiny.

6. Boosting Facilitator’s drive and inspiration. Facilitators’ morale, self-esteem and team work spirit can be boosted through teambuilding exercise and drawing out strength of individual Facilitator and combine them into supportive energy for the entire crop. Inspiration can be drawn from role model, agent of change, or those with experience of working for greater public good. The approach of linking religious faith with development should work in providing incentives to do public work. Linkage should also be identified between the value of their work and their life’s goals in order to reinforce the ideal and work spirit.

7. Capacity strengthening for new Facilitators. This can be done by lending clarity to the Project itself, the thinking and principles of CDD and the role of a Facilitator, strengthening their ability to read into the conflict contexts and insurgency, and basic grasp of the area where they are going to work for a start, building their facilitation skill and ability to work in conflict setting (i.e. safety precaution and self-defense/responding to violent incident onsite.)
Lessons Learnt from Facilitators

Source: This Note is extracted from the full report titled “A Study on Working as Community-Driven Development Facilitator in Thailand’s Conflict-Affected Southern Border Provinces under CACS and ECACS supported by the World Bank,” Nuchanad Juntavises and Somkiet Pitakkamonporn, 2015,

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