# Thailand country report in brief: Thoughts and Reflections on our Accomplishment and Its Paradoxes

Chaiyan Rajchagool, The Healing Family Foundation and the DS Persons 'Parent Support Group

# This presentation has three parts

- ►(I) Our Missions
- (II) Our Accomplishments
- ► (III) The Paradoxes

# (I) Two principal missions

- (i) Building Awareness and compassion.
- (ii) The inclusion in various aspects.

# Four Components to achieve them

- ▶ (a) Social Visibility, e.g., walk & run on Down Syndrome Day.
- ▶ (b) Ground Work, e.g., annual (and occasional) gatherings for children with Down syndrome.
- ► (c) Point Focus, e.g., workshops for parents on preparing children for adolescence.
- ▶ (d) Policy Formulation, e.g., workshops for healthcare personnel.

### (II) Our Accomplishments (since Feb 14, 1993)

- (i) the inclusive education by law (1999);
- (ii) the founding of parents' organizations;
- (iii) the opportunities for employment by law;
- (iv) social leisure activities;
- (v) state, social and business support

# Let's see some pictures of our achievements (partial and limited as they are)

- Most pictures are self explanatory.
- Hopefully they are not to be seen as self-advertisement.















#### Yearly gatherings for children with Down syndrome.



#### Yearly gatherings for children with Down syndrome.

(annual organizing for more than 15 years)



#### alk & Run for Down Syndrome On Down Syndrome Day



Expanding awareness campaigns.

Encouraging collaboration between families, organizations, and society.

Encouraging understanding, compassion, and shared happiness in society







#### **Down syndrome parents club**



Networking opportunities for parents of children with Down syndrome.

Sharing caregiving tips, resources, and emotional support.

Combining work and parenting to create fulfilling lives.





# On the Healthcare front where the paradox lies

- ► (a) Free antenatal screening tests under (famous) Thai Universal Health Coverage since 2021.
- ▶ (b) Importance of good counseling, the availability of accessible information and support infrastructure (both medical and non-medical).

### (II) The Paradox

- Social awareness of DS is essential, a positive knowledge, no doubt.
- ▶ But where does it leads to?

# Unintended consequences

- Owing to the absence of adequate counselling infrastructure,
- Once DS fetuses are detected, then the obstetricians' advice/suggestions generally are ...
- One's guess is as good as anybody's.

#### But

Antenatal screening tests was included in benefit package of Thai Universal health coverage, available for free to every pregnant. (2021)

# Good counselling?



# What is the purpose of antenatal screening?

- As healthcare has been increasingly becoming a money-making enterprise in recent years, the expanding private medical practices have stepped into the forefront.
- The (once) med advertisement taboo has become a thing of the past.

Examples of advertisement for Down syndrome screening at private hospitals







## A losing battle

- Early this year, at a meeting organized by Human Rights Commission, we strongly expressed our skepticism about and the impacts on the noninvasive prenatal testing (NIPT), to have it included in the universal health coverage program.
- ▶ But it was of no avail.
- ► The medical and social mindset are at the upper hands.

# In lieu of ending

- ► The dissemination of knowledge about DS has backfired.
- Something is rotten in the state of Denmark (oops, no) of Thailand.
- If you hear that Thailand is a Buddhist country,
- ▶ that is Buddha for sale, not for practice.
- ► Thank you for your attention