





The Schooling Gap between the Deep South and the Rest of the South in Thailand

Md. Nasir Uddin ^a and Saran Sarntisart ^b

^aDepartment of Economics, American International University-Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh; ^bGraduate School of Development Economics, National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to compare the educational attainment of a conflict region (the Deep South) and a non-conflict region (the rest of the South) of Thailand using the Socio-Economic Survey, 2015. This paper employs the Instrumental Variable approach and Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition in an intergenerational regression model. When controlling parental schooling, household income and size, religion, and gender, the results show that children from the Deep South obtain almost one year less schooling than children from the rest of the Southern region. Interestingly, Muslims are ahead in terms of educational attainment when compared to non-Muslims in the non-conflict region, but not in the conflict region. Females outperform males in both regions, but the coefficient of female dummy is higher in the non-conflict region. Moreover, the rate of intergenerational transmission of educational attainment is higher in the Deep South compared to that in the rest of the southern region, which may lead to long-term educational inequality in the Deep South region. The Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition confirms that the 40% schooling gap between these two regions is unexplained but might be due to the chronic social unrest. The findings of this paper show that customized educational reforms and policies to resolve the conflict in the Deep South of Thailand should be employed.

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Introduction

The Deep South of Thailand consists of three border provinces, namely, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. Despite having a similar culture, language, and religion to Malaysia, the Anglo-Siamese Treaty in 1909 between Great Britain and the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand) kept this region as a part of Thailand, which triggered the conflict (Croissant 2005). Separatist groups are trying to establish the Deep South as an independent state (Brooks 2015). Although other reasons for the social unrest have been identified in previous literature, for instance, discriminatory governance against Muslims (Parks 2010), religious fundamentalism (International Crisis Group 2009), and corruption (Chalk 2008), many incidents have occurred, and numerous insurgent groups exist, which causes instability in the Deep South. The situation became even more violent in 2004 with killings at Krue Se Mosque and the Tak Bai (a place in Narathiwat province) by the Thai military (Pongsudhirak, 2006). From January 2004 to October 2021, the total number of incidences, dead, and injured are 21,235, 7294, and 13,550 respectively (Deep South Watch 2021). Besides the casualties, the Deep South has fallen behind in terms of schooling as educational institutions have been affected by the conflict. Attacks at