

**Speech at the RF Centennial Reception**

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Chairman, Mahidol University Council

Chairman of Prince Mahidol Award Conference Organizing Committee

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Chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation Mr. David Rockefeller, Jr., Mrs. Susan Rockefeller and Distinguished Guests

It is my great honor and pleasure to be invited to give a short address in this auspicious occasion of Centennial Celebration of the Rockefeller Foundation, a great friend of Thailand. As mentioned by David Rockefeller, shortly after its establishment the RF came to Thailand almost 90 years ago and help modernizing medical education at the Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital which was the only medical school of Thailand at the time. The RF has been a great friend of Thailand ever since.

Another big wave of RF assistance to the development of Thailand came 50 years ago. The RF President's Review and Annual Report 1967 gave clear information and I quote "The University Development Program in Bangkok was initiated in 1963, and aid has been provided to four outstanding Thai institutions: agricultural sciences projects have been assisted at Kasetsart University; the humanities and social sciences at Thammasat, Kasetsart, and Chulalongkorn Universities; and basic sciences and medical studies at the

University of Medical Sciences. General support, administrative and planning assistance, and library development have also been provided.”

This time the RF help establishing our fourth medical school, Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital and also help establishing the Faculty of Medical Science at the University of Medical Sciences with the aim to be a faculty with strong research and graduate program.

The name of the Faculty of Medical Science has been changed to the Faculty of Science and the name of the University of Medical Sciences has been changed to Mahidol University. Strong research culture and infrastructure has been established at the Faculty of Science under assistance of the RF, providing equipments, PhD scholarships, academic staffs, and library development support. At the beginning all department heads were American Professors who help developing and mentoring Thai scholars who took charge afterwards. The name of Professor James S. Dinning, Professor of Chemistry who also served as the RF representative should be mentioned. Barely 20 years after its beginning, the Faculty of Science became the strongest university faculty in the country in term of research output and impact. And has remain strong ever since.

The Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital employed an inquiry-based as well as community-based curriculum. This medical school produces graduates who are motivated to serve the country and the people in the rural areas. They took part in the Rural Doctors Movement in the country 30 years ago. Now many of them are leading figures in the health systems development at the national level as well as at the global level.

As mentioned in the RF 1967 Annual Report, the RF provided to Thailand during the 60s in 3 areas of Higher Education; health, agriculture, and humanities and social sciences. The remarkable impact in Social Sciences is in Economics. Agricultural Economics education and research was remarkably strengthened at Thammasart and Kasetsart Universities. The strength grows up till now.

In agriculture the RF assisted through the Joint Program under Kasetsart University and the Ministry of Agriculture aiming at the improvement of rice, corn and sorghum production. The National Corn and Sorghum Research Center under Kasetsart University situated at Pakchong, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The Center has continually produced high impact research and development.

One last point of key contribution of the RF to the development of higher education in Thailand during the 60s was in Graduate studies. At the time formal graduate studies was practically non-existent in Thailand. Under assistance of the RF graduate studies started in Thailand in the 3 areas namely Medical Sciences, Agriculture, and Humanities and Social Science.

During the 1980s RF founded and supported a global network called INCLEN (International Clinical Epidemiology Network) to bridge the discipline of medicine and public health. Four Medical Schools in Thailand were invited to join the network; Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital of Mahidol University, Faculty of Medicine Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Medicine Chiangmai University, and Faculty of Medicine Khon Kaen University. Epidemiology and research methodology in Thailand has been

remarkably strengthened by the network activities. Other medical schools also receive spill over effect. The Network is still active nowadays.

In 1987 the RF initiated and funded NEBT (National Epidemiology Board of Thailand) to strengthen evidence-based health system. The activities of NEBT led to the establishment of HSRI (Health Systems Research Institute), the institute which propel health systems development of Thailand during the last 20 years. And now we are proud of our universal health coverage scheme. NEBT later became National Health Foundation, an NGO active in supporting evidence-based health development.

It is evident that the RF has an important role for the long term development of Thailand's health systems to attain good health at low cost.

Nowadays the RF has a Regional Office in Bangkok. The areas of work has been much wider. But good relationship with health sector continues. Since the beginning of PMAC (Prince Mahidol Award Conference) 7 years ago the RF has been co-host or co-organizer in every year. This is the collaboration on global health policy and health systems development for the benefit of mankind. The RF and the PMAF bears the same ideology, following footsteps of John D. Rockefeller and Prince Mahidol of Songkla.

The first Centennial of the RF is the centennial of continue strong relationship with Thailand starting from donor – recipient relationship. Now we continue the relationship but transform it to collaborative relationship. A collaboration for the benefit of mankind.

On behalf of all Thai friends of the RF I would like to congratulate and pay a salute to the great success of the RF in the first centennial and look forward to collaborations for a more successful second centennial.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I propose a toast to congratulate David and Susan and the Rockefeller Family for the past and future success of the Rockefeller Foundation?

Thank you very much

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