

## Thailand



Thailand is a middle income country with impressive achievements in both economic and social development. The country also has a long and successful history of health development achieving universal health care for Thai citizens in 2002, vibrant primary health care and innovative health system development and health promotion, leveraging alcohol and tobacco tax to finance health promotion activities. The basic principles of the Tenth 5-Year National Health Development Plan, 2007-2011, are based on a people-centered approach and philosophy of “sufficiency economy.” Thailand’s Human Development Index has improved, inexorably aided by health development, although Thailand’s rapidly aging population creates new challenges. Almost all health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been achieved at the national level, but disaggregation reveals disparities. The incidence of poverty remains 4-8 fold greater in 4 regions as compared to Bangkok. Continued unrest in the deep South is associated with deteriorating health indicators. A large proportion of the estimated 2-3 million non-Thai migrants working in Thailand do not enjoy full access to health services and are more vulnerable to public health hazards, exploitation and trafficking.

### HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT

**Public health bodies:** In addition to the Ministry of Public Health, other important public health bodies in Thailand include the Health System Research Institute (HSRI), Thai Health Promotion Foundation (“ThaiHealth”), National Health Security Office (NHSO), National Health Commission Office (NHCO), and the Emergency Medical Institute of Thailand (EMIT).

**Epidemiological transition:** Thailand is witnessing both demographic and epidemiologic transitions. The total fertility rate (TFR) has dropped from 2.4 in 1990 to 1.6 in 2006 with an estimated population growth rate of 0.7% for the period 2004-2015. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and emerging pathogens remain important and compounded with emerging drug resistance particularly among mobile/border populations. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are equally important as lifestyles change and the population ages. These include chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes as well as those associated with the risk factors of smoking, unsafe use of alcohol, inactivity, unhealthy diet and environmental degradation. Injuries, particularly those related to road traffic accidents, represent one of the highest causes of morbidity and mortality in Thailand and extract a high economic toll on the country. Many current public health challenges require multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration as well as efforts to address their social determinants.

**Health systems:** The national health budget increased from 5.8% of total government spending in 1993 to 11.3% in 2006. About 60% of all health expenditure comes from government sources. In 2001 the government introduced the Universal Health Care (UC) policy (the “30-Baht scheme”), in 2002 universal health care coverage, and in 2007 universal coverage without pay. Issues remain concerning health service quality, sustainability, and adequate health personnel.

**Public and national self-reliance in health:** While the Ninth Health Development Plan emphasized a life-cycle health approach, promoting healthy lifestyles, improving the quality of health care, disease prevention and control, and preparing for the need of an ageing population, the Tenth Plan emphasizes public and national self-reliance in health and quality of services.

**Roles in Regional and sub-regional cooperation in health development:** Thailand is an emerging development partner and active in a number of regional and sub-regional cooperative initiatives. There are 35 WHO Collaborating Centers in Thailand which together with other Centers of Excellence are organized into a network (called NEW-CCET).

Total population (2008) <sup>1</sup>	63,389,730
% under 15 (2008) <sup>1</sup>	21
% Population living in urban areas (2007) <sup>2,2</sup>	64.1
Life expectancy at birth (2007) <sup>2</sup>	70
Under-5 mortality rate per 1000 (2007) <sup>2</sup>	7
Maternal mortality rate per 100 000 live births (2005) <sup>2</sup>	110
% Antenatal care coverage - at least 4 visits (2000-2008) <sup>2</sup>	74
% Births attended by skilled health personnel (2000-8) <sup>2</sup>	97
% Infants exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life (2000-8) <sup>2</sup>	5
Total expenditure on health as % of GDP (2006) <sup>2</sup>	3.5
General government expenditure on health as % of general government expenditure (2006) <sup>2</sup>	11
Human Development Index Rank, out of 182 countries (2009) <sup>3</sup>	87
Gross National Income (GNI) per capita USD (2008) <sup>4</sup>	3,670
Adult (15+) literacy rate (2000-2007) <sup>2</sup>	94
Prevalence of tuberculosis (per 100,000 population) <sup>2</sup>	192
% Tuberculosis treatment success under DOTS (2006) <sup>2</sup>	77
% population with access to improved drinking water source (200.6) <sup>2</sup>	98
% population with improved access to sanitation (2006) <sup>2</sup>	96
% Prevalence of current tobacco use (2005) <sup>2</sup>	22

**Sources:**

1. Bureau of Health Policy and Strategy
2. World Health Statistics 2009
3. Human Development Report 2009, UNDP
4. World Development Indicators 2010, World Bank

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust health infrastructure</li> <li>• High government priority on health security, universal health care coverage, health promotion, and healthy public policy using participatory approaches</li> <li>• 7 national public health agencies with complementary strengths</li> <li>• Strengthening local government in response to the decentralization policy</li> <li>• Strong civil society on health issues</li> <li>• Excellence and expertise in academic, governmental and non-governmental institutions</li> <li>• Development of a new National Health Plan for 2012-2016</li> <li>• Development of a new CCS for 2012-2017 and a new United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) for 2012-16</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “dual burden” of important communicable diseases and noncommunicable diseases</li> <li>• High tuberculosis burden</li> <li>• Artemisinin-tolerant malaria in border areas</li> <li>• Widespread iodine deficiency</li> <li>• Sustaining universal quality health care</li> <li>• Road safety</li> <li>• Food safety</li> <li>• Environmental and occupational health, including increasing exposure to asbestos</li> <li>• Migrant and border health issues</li> <li>• Policy coherence across sectors; multi-sectoral coordination/collaboration</li> <li>• Political instability</li> </ul>

## PARTNERS

Thailand receives support (technical and financial) from development partners to strengthen national capacity in the health sector. They include the United Nations agencies (ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO), The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, development banks, bilateral donors and grant programmes (USAID, Bloomberg Initiative, BMGF) as well as other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Ministry of Public Health has also established the Thailand MoPH–United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Collaboration Center (TUC) to strengthen national capacity in the prevention and control of HIV and tuberculosis as well as epidemics and emerging infections. Thailand is also gradually becoming a development partner by assisting developing countries, both within and outside the region. It has established the Thai International Technical Cooperation Agency (TICA) for technical cooperation with other countries.

Thailand has been active in a number of regional and sub-regional cooperation initiatives through the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Ayawaddy-Chao Praya-Mekong Economic Cooperation (ACMECS). The Greater Mekong Sub-region, which comprises six countries along the Mekong basin (Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), also builds strong partnerships in social and economic cooperation. In the area of health, Thailand is active in the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Initiative (MBDS) and the Mekong Malaria Programme.

## WHO STRATEGIC AGENDA (2008-2011)

### Key principles for the WHO Strategic Agenda:

- Enhance advocacy in supporting government matters critical to health, based on WHO mandates and governing body resolutions
- Supporting the governments leadership role in formulating and implementing the national health development plan
- Emphasize the role of WHO as a policy adviser, convener, broker, catalyzes, and link to technical expertise, while recognizing and facilitating the critical work of other key partners in health
- Maintain flexibility to respond to emerging issues, while defining the boundaries within which WHO will respond to exert its comparative advantage and use its social capital
- Facilitate horizontal collaboration between Thailand and other countries within the region and beyond
- Enhance and strengthen partnerships within the United Nations Country Team and in accordance with the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) as well as with other agencies and actors

### Strategic agenda:

- Enhancing primary prevention, surveillance and control of communicable diseases and epidemics, Strengthening core capacities as per the International Health Regulations (IHR2005); Strengthening food safety
- Integrating measures to reduce risks of noncommunicable diseases, injuries and mental illness;
- Building capacity and partnerships for health promotion and healthy public policy; Strengthening capacity for monitoring and evaluating, Health systems development;
- Promoting a multi-sectoral approach to address health services for the poor and at-risk population, including those in border and conflict areas;
- Promoting environmental health and surveillance of environmental hazards;
- Strengthening the development of human resources for public health through existing networks within and outside the country.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WHO country page <http://www.who.int/countries/tha/en/>

Country office web site <http://www.whothailand.org/en/index.htm>

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